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CONTENTS

The Merely Personal
Jeremy Bernstein 295

A Fat Man Struggles to Get Out
Aristides 303

An Author's Mail
Barbara W. Tuchman 313

Remembering World War II:
The Perspective of the Losers
James D. Wilkinson 329

Cricket and Beyond: The Career of C. L. R. James
Jervis Anderson 345

Visits to a Morgue
Heinz R. Kuehn 363

Understanding Lebanon
Leila Fawaz 377

Behind the Blue Pencil:
Censorship or Creeping Creativity?
Jacques Barzun 385

Readers' Rights & Writers' Property:
The Public Lending Right
William B. Goodman 389

The Rise of Christianity
W. H. C. Frend 397

POETRY

The Mary Elinore Smith Poetry Prize
I Am Dancing with My Mennonite Father
Anne-Ruth Ediger Baehr 326

Lucky
Michael Blumenthal 328

The Swallow Watcher
Wendy Barker 344

Reminded of Bougainville
Donald Davie 360

The Dead Pigeon
John Stone 402

The One-Year-Old Lemon Tree
W. S. Di Piero 403

BOOKS

Remembering Thornton Wilder
Elder Olson 404

Reviews
Vernon Young, Eugen Weber, Amy L. Wax,
Mary R. Lefkowitz, Paul Oskar Kristeller 414

THE READER REPLIES 431

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Out of My Mind

The Merely Personal

JEREMY BERNSTEIN

In 1968, James Watson published his widely acclaimed autobiographical account of the discovery of the structure of DNA—*The Double Helix*. "Widely acclaimed" probably does not do justice to its impact. Many people were outright scandalized. One of the things that appeared to exercise them was the not overly surprising fact that Watson seemed to have a sizable interest in persons of the other gender—women—and that he was prepared to write about it, in an ostensibly *scientific* autobiography, with what people at the time regarded as too much candor. Here are a couple of the kind of *osé* passages that upset many of Watson's readers.

> There was no restraint in Francis' enthusiasms about young women [Francis is Francis Crick, Watson's collaborator]—that is, as long as they showed some vitality and were distinctive in any way that permitted gossip and amusement. When young he saw little of women and was only now discovering the sparkle they added to life. Odile [Crick's wife] did not mind this predilection, seeing that it went along with, and probably helped, his emancipation from the dullness of his Northampton upbringing. They would talk at length about the somewhat artsy-craftsy world in which Odile moved and into which they were frequently invited. No choice event was kept out of our conversation and he would show equal gusto in telling of his occasional mistakes. One occurred when there was a costume party and he went looking like a young G. B. Shaw in a full red beard. As soon as he entered he realized that it was a ghastly error, since not one of the young women enjoyed being tickled by the wet scraggly hairs when he came within kissing distance.

Here is another, even more risqué, fragment:

> Our conversation instead centered upon a young art student then about to marry Odile's friend Harmut Weil. This capture was mildly displeasing to Francis. It was about to remove the prettiest girl from their party circle. Moreover, there was more than one thing cloudy about Harmut. He had come out of a German university tradition that believed in dueling. There was also his undeniable skill in persuading numerous Cambridge women to pose for his camera.

Watson's book—as timorous as it seems in retrospect—opened a kind of floodgate of scientific confessions. At the present time—and this is the main subject of these remarks—we are all but drowning in biographies and autobiographies of scientists who seem almost desperately eager to tell us a lot more about themselves than we really want to, or probably should, know. Before I turn to this, let me point out that both Watson's confession, and its antithesis—the scientific autobiography that tells us next to nothing about the personal life of the scientist—have distinguished precedents.

The great sixteenth-century astronomer Johann Kepler maintained a kind of horoscopic diary. In later life, incidentally, Kepler made his living to some extent—a little like consulting—by drawing horoscopes. To what extent he believed in them is not clear. In any event, here are a few entries from Kepler's horoscope:

> On the birth of Johann Kepler. I have investigated the matter of my conception, which took place in the year 1571, May 16, at 4:37 a.m. . . . My weakness at birth removes the suspicion that my mother was already pregnant at the marriage, which was the 15th of May. . . . Thus I was born premature, at thirty-two weeks, after 224 days, ten hours. . . .
>
> 1575 [age four] I almost died of small pox, was in

JEREMY BERNSTEIN's latest book is *Three Degrees Above Zero*.

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very ill health, and my hands were badly crippled. . . .

1585–86 [age fourteen–fifteen] During these two years, I suffered continually from skin ailments, often severe sores, often from the scabs of putrid wounds in my feet which healed badly and kept breaking out again. On the middle finger of my right hand I had a worm, on the left a huge sore. . . .

1592 [age twenty-one] I went down to Weil and lost a quarter florin at gambling. . . . At Cupinga's I was offered union with a virgin; on New Year's Eve I achieved this with the greatest possible difficulty, experiencing the most acute pains of the bladder. . . .

That is autobiography! Or what about this bit of self-analysis:

That man [this is Kepler referring to himself] has in every way a dog-like nature. His appearance is that of a little lap-dog. His body is agile, wiry and well-proportioned. Even his appetites were alikê: he liked gnawing bones and dry crusts of bread, and was so greedy that whatever his eyes chanced on he grabbed; yet, like a dog, he drinks little and is content with the simplest food. His habits were similar. He continually sought the goodwill of others, was dependant on others for everything, ministered to their wishes, never got angry when they reproved him and was anxious to get back into their favour. He was constantly on the move, ferreting among the sciences, politics and private affairs, including the lowest kind; always following someone else, and imitating his thoughts and actions. He is bored with conversation, but greets his visitors just like a little dog; yet when the last thing is snatched away from him, he flares up and growls. He tenaciously persecutes wrong-doers—that is he barks at them. He is malicious and bites people with his sarcasms. He hates many people exceedingly and they avoid him, but his masters are fond of him. He has a dog-like horror of baths, tinctures and lotions. His recklessness knows no limits, which is surely due to Mars in quadrature with Mercury, and in trine with the moon. . . .

If this is the "anode" of scientific autobiography, then the "cathode" must surely be Einstein's so-called "Autobiographical Notes," written when he was sixty-seven. Indeed, by its fourth paragraph Einstein makes it clear that the whole point of his having chosen science as his life's work was to free himself from what he calls the "merely personal"—autobiography. The conjunction of the words *merely* and *personal* is enough to set off rockets. This is what he writes:

It is quite clear to me that the religious paradise of youth . . . was a first attempt to free myself from the chains of the "merely personal," from an existence which is dominated by wishes, hopes and primitive feelings. Out yonder there was this huge world, which exists independently of us as human beings and which stands before us like a great eternal riddle, at least partially accessible to our inspection and thinking. The contemplation of this world beckoned like a liberation, and I soon noticed that many a man whom I had learned to esteem and to admire had found inner freedom and security in devoted occupation with it. . . . The road to this paradise was not as comfortable and alluring as the road to the religious paradise, but it has proved itself as trustworthy, and I have never regretted having chosen it.

Given Einstein's apparent disdain—even contempt—for the "merely personal," one is not surprised to find that his autobiography has very little to do with the details of his actual life. For example, there is no mention at all of either of his two wives or his two sons. What the autobiography does contain is a wonderful account of how he came upon various of his great ideas in physics—his discovery of the relativity theory, for example. Indeed, when one finishes reading it, one asks oneself if there is anything more that needs to be said. This question is particularly acute if one happens to be embarked on the project of writing a biography of Einstein, which was my situation some years ago. I decided that there was more to be said. (In any case, I said more, since I wrote the biography.) In the first place, Einstein's "Autobiographical Notes" is extremely technical. I doubt that it is fully accessible to anyone who is not a professional physicist. For this reason alone I think one has, if one is able, an obligation to make this intellectual history available to a wider audience. Einstein was one of the great treasures of our century, and anyone who is interested should have the opportunity to understand some of his ideas and achievements. In the second place, Einstein was not able to detach himself fully from the "merely personal" either. He did, after all, marry twice. But his life *was* a wonderful moral example. We all need heroes, and if one takes Einstein as one's hero one will not do too badly. In fact, to write a biography of Einstein that tries to "humanize" him by showing his faults—his "humanness" in some trivial sense—misses the point.

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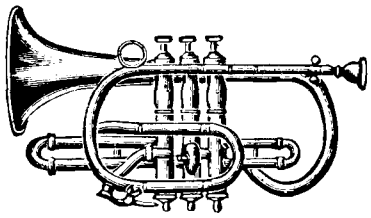

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There are a few people who are simply better than most people—"the inconvenient saints . . ." in T. S. Eliot's phrase—and to try to make them less than they were, less different than they were, distorts what they were. This is what so many historians of science found so offensive about Roland Clark's biography, *Einstein: The Life and Times*, which has just been reissued in a sort of grotesque coffee-table version. The title, incidentally, bears an uncanny relation to the title of Philipp Frank's wonderful biography, *Einstein: His Life and Times*. The last paragraph of Clark's book is a perfect précis of what is wrong with it:

> Perhaps he [Einstein] should not have been so bearish about people? Perhaps he should never have gone to Berlin, made the way so much easier for the aggressors with his pacifism, or hated the Germans so much that he encouraged Roosevelt into the nuclear age? Perhaps he should not always have put science first? [Maybe he should have taken up ballroom dancing?] But on this there was, of course, no room for doubt, no cause for regret. As he took two deep breaths and died, it is unlikely that Einstein regretted much. [It is also unlikely that Clark was there to observe this bathetic scene.] But Mrs. Rozel [the night nurse in the hospital] did not understand his German. And anyway, as Elsa [Einstein's second wife, with whom Clark is now on a first-name basis] had felt nearly twenty years before, dear God, it was too late now. [Dear God! is right.]

As I mentioned earlier, my real concern here is to discuss the flood of confessional scientific biographies and autobiographies that Watson's *Double Helix* appears to have turned loose. In the following paragraphs are quotations from three recent examples. I will simply give the quotations after identifying the books and describing very briefly their subjects. I will save most of the commentary for later.

Salvador Luria, who won the Nobel Prize for medicine in 1969, was Watson's principal scientific mentor when Watson was a student at the University of Indiana. In the introduction to his autobiography, *A Slot Machine, A Broken Test Tube*, Luria makes it quite clear that he regards *The Double Helix* as a model of what a scientific autobiography should be. He writes: "If an autobiography is to be more than a superficial record of events, it must be something of a confession." But a confession of what? Here are two paragraphs taken from near the end of the book.

> The story of my depressions, which caused much suffering to me and to my family, ought to be told in some detail, if only for the purposes of medical history. Depressive episodes of various intensities and durations came at intervals of several months for three decades, demanding of me a staggering effort, while they lasted, to keep functioning at a more or less normal pace. Over twenty years, at different times, and in different cities, by psychiatrists and psychologists, I was subjected to psychotherapy of various ilks, from Freudian psychoanalysis to less doctrinaire treatments. I was exposed over those years to what I saw then and see now as a series of intellectually vacuous interactions claiming to have therapeutic validity. Only my suffering and a sense of duty to seek treatment justified my willingness to persist. What seems to me unforgivable is that even when, in the 1960's, antidepressive medication became available it was either not prescribed for me or prescribed in preposterously small doses, fifty times smaller than was used by competent practitioners, as I later found out.
>
> I might still be suffering under pointless treatment by some psychotherapist if a major depressive attack had not brought me into the hands of a competent psychiatrist. Three months of adequate doses of antidepressant drugs followed by long-term lithium treatment have freed me of all symptoms of depression for the past ten years, adding a new dimension to my enjoyment of life and making my family life serene, relieved from fear of impending depressions.

I pass from these paragraphs to the next example withholding, for the moment, any comment. The next example I take from a generally thoughtful and impressive biography of the British mathematician and computer genius Alan Turing. It is written by the British mathematical physicist Andrew Hodges and is called *Alan Turing: The Enigma*. It is perhaps important for what follows to note that Mr. Hodges identified himself as a member of the London Gay Liberation Front. This is important because Turing was a homosexual during a period in Britain when this was essentially against the law, the law being the crime of Gross Indecency—specifically, section 11 of the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1885—which made the commitment of any homosexual act, under no

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matter what circumstances, a crime. Turing was convicted under this act in 1952 and sentenced to a year of "organo-therapy"—taking of prescribed doses of estrogen. These caused Turing to become impotent as well as to grow breasts. All of this, by the way, was after several years of war service, during which Turing had applied his genius to breaking the famous German Enigma codes, something that played a vital role in winning the war. On June 7, 1954, Turing died, apparently after eating an apple poisoned, one assumes by his own hand, with cyanide. Mr. Hodges writes about all of this with dignity and appropriate outrage. It was a sickening episode. Somewhere fairly near the beginning of the book there occur the following paragraphs:

> In August or September 1940 Alan had a week's holiday, and spent it with Bob, making an effort to give him a treat. He had booked them to stay at what was for Alan a very posh hotel, a renovated castle near Pandy, in Wales. . . .
>
> They went fishing and for long walks over the hills. After a day or two Alan made a gentle sexual approach, but Bob rebuffed it. Alan did not ask again. It did not affect the holiday. Bob perceived that the possibility had been at the back of Alan's mind from the beginning, but did not feel that Alan had taken advantage of him. He was simply not interested.
>
> None of this was quite what Churchill had in mind when calling the British people to brace themselves to their duties, or speaking of the Empires that might last a thousand years. But duty and empires did not solve ciphers, and Churchill never bargained for an Alan Turing.

I leave this, too, without comment for the moment.

The last example I take from a recent book by Richard P. Feynman called "*Surely You're Joking, Mr. Feynman!*" Feynman is, perhaps, the most original genius produced in theoretical physics since the war. He won the Nobel Prize for physics in 1965. He is, as this book makes abundantly clear, an incredible character. The book appears to be the transcription of a number of tape-recorded conversations that Feynman had with a friend of his named Richard Leighton. Each conversation has its own chapter, and put together, they make a kind of mosaic of Feynman's life and times. This quotation is taken from a chapter called "You Just *Ask* Them?":

> When I was back at Cornell in the fall, I was dancing with the sister of a grad student, who was visiting from Virginia. She was very nice, and suddenly I got this idea: "Let's go to a bar and have a drink," I said.
>
> On the way to the bar I was working up the nerve to try the master's lesson on an *ordinary* girl. [The "master" was the master of ceremonies in a small nightclub in New Mexico that Feynman had once encountered.] After all you don't feel so bad disrespecting a bar girl who's trying to get you to buy her drinks—but a nice, ordinary, Southern girl?
>
> We went into the bar, and before I sat down, I said, "Listen, before I buy you a drink, I want to know one thing: Will you sleep with me tonight?"
>
> "Yes."
>
> So it worked even with an ordinary girl! But no matter how effective the lesson was, I never really used it after that. I didn't enjoy doing it that way. But it was interesting to know that things worked much differently from how I was brought up.

What these examples have in common is that they are taken out of context. But they are out of context in the same sense that a sore thumb is out of context, and to the same effect. One can't, in a manner of speaking, stop staring at them. Good writers have, as a rule, some sort of internal gyroscope that tells them at what point the material is about to tip over and bring the entire enterprise crashing down. The three authors here are all professional scientists and do not seem to possess this faculty. Would any real writer juxtapose, for example, a description of an attempted homosexual seduction—which, I may add, is completely out of context in Mr. Hodges's biography—with the sentence: "None of this was quite what Churchill had in mind"? The juxtaposition is worthy of Woody Allen in his prime. Where was Mr. Hodges's editor? Based on some of my own experiences, I think that editor was very likely telling him that he needed a few more examples like that to make Turing seem more "human." Do we, referring to Luria's book, really need to know that he has been taking lithium for the last ten years for his depressions? Luria's book is one in the series sponsored by the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation in aid of, as the preface says, the "public understanding of science." This charter, one might have thought, would provide some useful guidance as to the book's contents. And Feynman. In much of his book Feynman takes enormous pleasure in describ-

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ing his avocations—*hobbies* is much too light a word—such as drawing and music, where he has made real achievements. Since he wanted his drawings to be judged for what they were and not because he was Feynman, he took to signing them "Ofey." He writes: "I didn't want people to buy my drawings because the professor of physics isn't supposed to be able to draw, isn't that wonderful." But isn't Feynman's anecdote about the Southern girl a perfect example of "the professor of physics" doing something he is not supposed to know how to do? If that anecdote had been told to one by a taxi driver, would one have given a damn, let alone would one have put it in a book? I, at least, find the Swiftian tones of Kepler's "That man has in every way a dog-like nature" much more palatable—indeed, even high art. But then Kepler was, in addition to being a great astronomer, a truly marvelous writer. In fact, his *Somnium: Sive Astronomia Lunaris*—usually translated simply as *Dream*—was the first great science fantasy. Perhaps scientists writing about themselves, and other scientists, should keep in mind that more can not only be less, but that it can also be disastrous.

All of this having been said, I think there are some examples from the recent literature where both the Scylla of the "merely personal" and the Charybdis of the totally impersonal have been avoided; the result is some first-class writing about scientists and their lives. Let me close by discussing two such works: *Hackers* by Steven Levy and *The Periodic Table* by Primo Levi. (I have no reason to suppose that the two authors are related.) The books have in common that they were both written by people one might describe as professional, or at the very least serious, writers. For many years Primo Levi has earned his living as a chemist, and Stephen Levy writes for *Rolling Stone*.

The use of the terms *hack*, *hacking*, and *hacker* in the sense of Mr. Levy's book seems to have developed at M.I.T. in the 1950s. It is difficult to give an entirely precise definition of what a *hack* is. It is more than a "trick." It is a very elegant way of doing something—solving something—that a priori might seem undoable or unsolvable or even uncreatable. The German word *witz* conveys the same idea, if one happens to know German. A person who is able to hack consistently comes to be regarded as a hacker. I see it as a designation with broad applications. Glenn Gould and Duke Ellington were hackers, as was Mozart. Beethoven wasn't. Nabokov and Thomas Pynchon were and are hackers. Socrates was and Aristotle wasn't. Kant certainly wasn't. As my friend Marvin Minsky, who was regarded by a whole generation of M.I.T. students as the king of the computer hackers, once noted, "If you do enough hacking you often get something profound." This was certainly true of Mozart.

Mr. Levy's book deals with what might be called the rise and fall of computer hacking in this country. The book begins and ends at M.I.T., as is only fitting. In the early 1960s, almost no one imagined that computers would ever be a part of the household furniture; they were humongous machines presided over by acolytes. A few visionaries—originally people like Alan Turing and Von Neumann, and later, younger people like Minsky—had the idea that these machines might, if iterated, become models of ourselves, our thinking, problem-solving selves. Turing even invented a fanciful test to help decide if, and when, that had happened; the criterion was that if an entity, which is generally agreed to be human, cannot decide from the output whether a second entity is a human or a machine, then the second entity has passed its "Turing test." For better or worse, no machine has yet passed.

The following paragraph from Mr. Levy's book is both an illustration of its style and an explanation of why hacking took hold at M.I.T. To set the scene: a sixteen-year-old freshman named Jerry Sussman arrived there in the middle 1960s. Like most of the future hackers, he had spent his high-school years being what Mr. Levy calls an "electronic junkie." One of the first things he did was to seek out the large computer. There was a man working on it who seemed to belong there, so Sussman asked if he too could fool around with the computer. He was told to go ahead and try. Here is what happened:

> Sussman began working on a program. Not long after, this odd-looking bald guy comes over. Sussman figured the guy was going to boot him out, but instead the man sat down, asking, "Hey, what are you doing?" Sussman talked over his program with the man, Marvin Minsky. At one point in the

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discussion, Sussman told Minsky that he was using a certain randomizing technique in his program because he didn't want the machine to have any preconceived notions. Minsky said, "Well it has them, it's just that you don't know what they are." It was the most profound thing Jerry Sussman had ever heard. And Minsky continued, telling him that the world is built a certain way, and the most important thing we can do with the world is avoid randomness, and figure out ways things can be planned. Wisdom like this had its effect on sixteen-year-old freshmen, and from then on Sussman was hooked.

Over the next few years Minsky built his laboratory into one of the most powerful computer centers in the world. It was also a very open place. *Proprietary* was an obscene word. Part of the hacker ethic was that everyone had a right to know what everyone else was doing. This is one reason why hackers spent so much time and energy breaking into secret computer programs. The other reason was that it was a lot of fun. It is no longer regarded as fun, and one can go to jail for it.

This Eden could not last. Ironically its downfall was caused by the hackers themselves, especially the California hackers in the person of Steve Wozniak and the Homebrew computer club that met in the mid-1970s in various places in what became known, not long after, as Silicon Valley—not far from San Francisco. By the time Wozniak—known in the trade as "Woz"—had finished high school, he was already *designing* computers. After a couple of desultory years at Berkeley where, among other things, he designed, and attempted to sell, "blue boxes"—electronic devices that could be used to make long-distance phone calls for free (Wozniak used *his* to attempt to call the Pope), Wozniak went to work for Hewlett-Packard. In his spare time he designed computer games for Atari, where his high-school friend Steven Jobs was then employed. That Wozniak is a hacker is beyond any doubt. The case of Jobs is harder to call. After reading Mr. Levy's book and a related one called *The Little Kingdom* by Michael Moritz—which also deals, and in more detail, with Wozniak and Jobs—I have decided that what Jobs was, and is, is one of the greatest salesmen that has ever lived. He persuaded Wozniak to put together the computer he had designed and then he began to sell them. Needless to say, the computer was what is now known as the Apple II, and the rest, as they say, is history.

Once the personal computer was launched, and this certainly was a consequence of the incredible success of the Apple, there had to be a reason for people to use them. Enter the computer game. This, too, had its origins with the hackers. In the 1960s a game called Spacewar was created at M.I.T. It was designed to run on a large mainframe computer. Before the hackers got tired of it, they had added every conceivable wrinkle, including an extra "sun" that provided a hazardous gravitational field. The tapes were given away to anyone who wanted a copy and who also had a mainframe computer to run them on. But after the success of the Apple, it became clear that *everyone* could have a facility on which to play games. The problem was to create them. Here the motivation was pure profit. The first of the great computer game entrepreneurs, Ken Williams, is quoted by Mr. Levy as saying, "I guess greed would summarize me better than anything. I always want more." Williams's wife, Roberta, created the first commercially successful computer game, Mystery House, and then followed it with an even more successful one called The Wizard and the Princess. It sold over sixty thousand copies at $32.95 a copy. Mr. Levy notes that the Williamses used to sit in their newly installed hot tub in California and "shake their heads, saying, 'Do you believe this?' " It was, in some sense, the end of the era of the hackers. There appears, however, to be at least one survivor, and Mr. Levy ends his book with a tale about him, one Richard Stallman. He came to M.I.T. in 1971, and by the 1980s he had decided that the whole hacker ethic was dead or dying. He spent his last years at M.I.T. re-creating commercial programs in order to give them away. As one of the M.I.T. establishment noted with awe, "In a fairly real sense he's been outhacking the whole bunch of them." This is a fine, strange, funny book and, I think, demonstrates that Mr. Levy is, himself, a hacker.

Primo Levi's book is something else again. I have long thought that there are two "limiting cases"—as the mathematicians would say—of autobiographies. One could imagine an individual who was a meticulous observer of al-

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most nothing at all, someone who had led a perfectly ordinary life, but who had observed it so closely and deeply that he or she could make it fascinating. On the other hand, one could imagine someone who had a fantastically interesting life but whose perceptions of it were essentially trivial; some mountain climbers fall into this class. Nonetheless, the autobiography of such a person could be, and sometimes is, fascinating simply because of the events themselves. Primo Levi falls into a third class—the best and rarest of classes—someone who has led a profound and deep life and whose perceptions of it are equally profound and deep.

Primo Levi is an Italian chemist now in his mid-sixties. I call him a chemist because that is what he was trained to be and that is how he has earned his living for most of his life. I have no idea whether, if the war had not intervened, he would have become a writer as well. It is difficult to imagine that someone with literary gifts of the magnitude of Mr. Levi's would not have used them. But who knows? In any event, it is academic because there was the war. Until 1942 Levi eked out a living at his chemistry. He had barely finished his studies when the Germans occupied Italy. What had merely been difficult for a Jew now became impossible and dangerous. Levi responded by joining the partisans. He writes: "We were cold and hungry, we were the most disarmed partisans in the Piedmont, and probably the most unprepared." In December of 1943 his unit was betrayed by an SS informer and Levi was captured. Eventually he ended up in Auschwitz where, improbably, he survived by working as a forced-labor chemist. He writes: "I was in a laboratory with two other skilled prisoners, similar to those educated slaves that the rich Romans imported from Greece." He has written two books, *Survival in Auschwitz* and *The Reawakening*, about this experience. They are regarded as modern Italian masterpieces. They are also all but impossible to find in this country. Perhaps, because of the success that *The Periodic Table* has enjoyed, they will be revived.

Why the title? The periodic table is, of course, the great organizing principle of chemistry, the ordered list of elements. Chemists have a feeling about matter that, for example, physicists do not. Chemists have to mold and transform the stuff, while physicists, at least theoretical physicists, try to make conceptual models that leave out nearly everything. One would be hard-pressed on a nature walk to identify iron or carbon by using a physicist's model. For Levi, as a chemist, each element has a touch and feel, an identity. They are so familiar and exercise such an influence over his conscious and subconscious thoughts that he has built his autobiography around them. Each chapter turns around an element. Nothing seems forced about this. The writing is so beautiful and so full of surprises that when one finishes the book one cannot imagine that it could have been written in any other way. This is not a book to try to summarize. It is a book simply to read. One is in the hands of a master.

The point I have tried to make, then, is that the "merely personal," when in the hands of a real writer, becomes something else and, when in the hands of a non-writer, usually turns into dross. The lesson for the scientist who wants to write about himself or other scientists is, in my view, summarized by one of the few aphorisms of Wittgenstein I really understand: "Wovon man nicht sprechen kann, darüber muss man schweigen [Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent]."

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A Fat Man Struggles to Get Out

ARISTIDES

How do things stand with you and the seven deadly sins? Here is my scorecard: Sloth I fight—to a draw. I surrendered to Pride long ago. Anger I tend to give in to so often that it makes me angry. Lust I'd rather not discuss. I haven't thus far done well enough in the world to claim Avarice as anything more than a theoretical sin. I appear to be making some headway against Envy, though I realize that it's touch and go. Of the seven deadly sins, the only one that has a continuing interest for me is Gluttony. But "continuing interest" is a euphemism; by it I mean that Gluttony is the last deadly sin that excites me in a big way—so much so that, though I am prepared to admit that Gluttony can be deadly, I am not all that prepared to say it is a sin. As soon as I pop this chocolate-chip cookie in my mouth, I shall attempt to explain what I mean.

I am not beautiful and I am probably not very fit, but I am, at least in a rough geometrical sense, in shape. I weigh what the charts say I ought to weigh. To some people I may seem slender. For the most part, I am not displeased with my physique. Certainly I have no wish to be fat; flabby I should heartily dislike; portly is a touch more than I should prefer—but, let me confess it, stout, solid dignified stout, doesn't sound that bad to me. Was it Cyril Connolly who said that within every fat man a thin man struggles to get out? With me the reverse condition obtains: I am a relatively thin man in whom a fat man struggles, sometimes quite desperately, to get out.

That fat man is no gourmet. He cannot claim to be a gourmand, which A. J. Liebling, a fat man who did get out, once defined as someone who loves delicacies and plenty of 'em. My fat man is less discriminating. He longs for quantities of sandwiches and great mounds of rather greasy french fried potatoes followed by great hunks of cake, a little snack washed down with tankards of soda pop (with Pepsi-Cola, to be specific, and not the no-calorie, caffeine-free, unleaded kind, either). Ribs, pizza, raw oysters, servings of ice cream that cover the entire surface of dinner plates—these are the names of some of my fat man's desires. He is always on the lookout for inexpensive restaurants that serve in impressive tonnage—restaurants out of which he dreams of walking, a toothpick clamped in his mouth, remarking to himself, "Yes, indeed, a slap-up meal; they did me very well in there."

You can see why this fat man cannot be turned loose. I do on occasion let him out for a weekend or a holiday, in what I suppose is the gastronomical equivalent of a work-release program. But set scot-free, left to forage full-time for himself, this man would kill me with his teeth and bury me with a fork. Clearly a dangerous character, he must be held under lock and key and, when let out, kept under the strictest surveillance. Moderation is a principle he does not recognize, deferred gratification is a phrase of whose meaning he remains ignorant, compromise he won't even consider. All this being the case, I can only say to him, as I frequently do, "Sorry, Tons-of-Fun, it's the slammer for you."

Perhaps I would be better off in the condition of a friend who one day told me that, as the result of a boyhood fistfight in which his nose was so badly smashed it had to be remade, he had lost roughly eighty percent of his sense of taste. To him food was now almost sheerly a matter of fuel. I greeted this announcement with a mixture of envy for his release from a troubling passion and sadness at his deprivation. I have known others who could eat until the cows come home, and then

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slaughter the cows for a steak sandwich—all without the least effect on girth or chin or limb. These, in my view, are among the favorites of the gods. To me the gods have dealt differently, bestowing upon me an appetite that is matched only by my vanity. I wish to live fat but be thin.

I was not bred for the kind of careful abstinence that is the admired eating standard of our day. A finicky child, I was catered to in my extreme fussiness. (Freud says that a man who as a child feels assured of his mother's love is likely to think himself a conqueror; I say this same conqueror is likely to have a weight problem.) Whatever Aristides wanted, Aristides got—in my mother's kitchen, Lola had nothing on me. In adolescence, my tastes in food broadened and my appetite deepened. Ours was always an impressive larder. I can recall many a night, before settling in to sleep, fixing myself a little snack that might consist of, say, a dozen or so cookies, a pint of butter-pecan ice cream, a gross or so of grapes, and four fingers of salami. Nor was sleep after such a repast in any way a problem. Today, of course, this kind of snack, attempted at my age, could only be construed as a suicide attempt.

My mother knew I ate huge portions at home, but she could not know that the ample meals she served me were perhaps half my daily ration. She could not know because I did not tell her. As a serious eater I hadn't, you might say, come out of the pantry. But out of the pantry I surely emerged. After a breakfast at home of orange juice, eggs, and toast, I would, upon arrival at high school, generally plunge into a smoke-filled school store called Harry's, where, to fortify myself for the strenuous mental effort that lay ahead, I engorged something known as a chocolate square (approximate weight: one-third pound), a small stein of root beer, and the smoke of two Lucky Strike cigarettes. Often with friends I would take tiffin at a nearby Jewish delicatessen called Ashkenaz; the meal usually consisted of soup, corned-beef sandwiches, and other of those Jewish foods that, as one sour-stomached Jewish gentleman I know has put it, have caused more difficulties for the Jews than Pharaoh himself. After lunch it was back to the classroom, where, on a full stomach, I was easily able to ignore what should have been the rudiments of my education. After school, a flaneur du gastronomique, I might knock back a small bag of french fries liberally slathered with ketchup, which, most afternoons, along with perhaps a banana and six or seven cookies, would see me through to dinner.

Proust famously used food—his little fluted madeleine cake—to bid memory; working at things the other way round, I bid memory to recall food. I remember a Rumanian Jewish restaurant to which my parents used to take us where the waiters seemed to have stepped out of Jewish jokes. Once, as a small boy, when I asked one of them if the restaurant had any soda pop, he, towel over his shoulder, pencil poised over his order pad, sourly replied, "Yeh, ve gots two kinds. Ve gots red and ve gots brown." I remember when a small chain of rather deluxe hamburger restaurants named Peter Pan was caught serving its customers horse meat and, in a gesture to return to the public's good graces, gave away free hamburgers for a day, thus creating a living fantasy in which every boy could be his own Wimpy. In the autumn of 1952, Dwight David Eisenhower was elected president, elaborate peace negotiations were under way in Korea, François Mauriac won the Nobel Prize for literature, and I, a freshman in high school, tasted pizza for the first time and thought I had died and gone to heaven.

That same year, in an episode of shame, I recall walking along the avenue with my faithful companion Roberto Ginsburg, who, always the tempter, suggested we buy and share and dispatch a cake. Dispatch it we did, but I cannot say neatly. As in so many of our combined enterprises, an element of planning was missing. In this instance, the cake now purchased, we noted the absence of utensils for cutting it—a large chocolate affair with a combined chocolate and pistachio frosting—and, once cut, for conveying it to our mouths. We could have brought the cake home, there to have an ample slice in his or my mother's kitchen. But we did not want a slice of cake, however ample—we wanted an entire cake. So we ate it, walking along side streets, prying great fistfuls away from the cake and stuffing them into our mouths in the style we designated "one billion B.C." We are talking about two reasonably well brought up middle-class

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boys here, you understand, but true hunger, to the truly craving, will turn even a middle-class lad into a savage.

Middle-class and Middle Western, I should have added, for when I think of the ideal middle-class meal of my youth, eaten in a restaurant, it comprises the following plain but to me, then as now, quite pleasing Middle Western menu: it begins with a shrimp cocktail; followed by a wedge of iceberg lettuce with thousand island dressing; followed by a rather thick slab of medium-rare prime rib of beef, with a baked potato (not cooked in aluminum foil) lavished with butter and sour cream with chives; and concluded with strawberry shortcake and coffee. This is, you will recognize, almost an entirely prelapsarian meal; it could only have been eaten in good conscience before the vile knowledge that certain foods can clog arteries, set tumors growing, send up blood pressure. If you are someone who would like to get to ninety-six or ninety-seven, and hence someone attentive to death by cancer, heart attack, or stroke, what you are permitted from that meal I have described, once the calories, the cholesterol, and the caffeine are removed, is a plain baked potato on a bed of undressed lettuce with a few strawberries atop it nicely garnished with chives. Dig in.

I mock such curtailment of pleasure—I hate it, truth to tell—yet I am myself victim to it. Far from always but still all too often, I look down at the plate set before me to find potential death through possible heart disease or cancer lurking there—and if not death, social disgrace through overweight. Until roughly twenty-five years ago, those of us born into industrially developed countries, though we may not have known it, were all living in the kitchen of Eden. The snake responsible for casting us out is named Diet: today few are the people who are not dieting for health, for beauty, for longevity. *Eat to Win* is the title of a recent best-seller that supplies diets and menus for people who wish to stay young and athletically competitive. The well-named *Self* magazine calls it "the eating wave of the future." *Eat to Win*? Whatever happened to eat to eat?

Not that I am above diet. I spend a serious portion of my life attempting to lose the extra four or five pounds that clearly wishes to adhere to me. I gain it, I drop it off, I gain it, I drop it off—we are, those four or five pounds and I, like a couple who cannot agree to live peaceably together but who refuse to separate permanently. I need no reminder when they have returned: when the press of my flesh rubs the waist of my trousers, it is time to miss a meal, hold the fries, play strong defense generally. Aggravation makes the best diet, in my view, and once, in a troubled time in my life, I dropped off fifteen pounds without consciously attempting to do so. Another time I set out to lose twenty pounds; I did it, and I wish to report that the feeling upon having succeeded in doing so is one I describe as "fatness of soul." One is so splendidly well pleased with oneself. An element of fanaticism slides in. One has lost twenty pounds—why not twenty-five? A friend described my play on the racquetball court as quicker than a sperm. I thought I looked wonderfully well when I had lost all that weight: so lithe, so elegant, so youthful. Apparently this was not the effect I everywhere conveyed, for more than one person, during this period, asked my wife straight-out if I were suffering from a wasting disease.

Because of this little experience I believe I can understand something of what goes on in the mind of the anorexic. The anorexic is the reverse of the glutton, but it is well to remember that the anorexic is the other side of the same coin. (The currently accepted definition of anorexia nervosa is "a serious illness of deliberate self-starvation with profound psychiatric and physical components.") As food excites the glutton, so does it repel the anorexic (most of whom are adolescent girls or youngish women). The glutton's idea of a jolly fine time is precisely the anorexic's idea of hell. As the glutton in extreme cases will have to have his jaw wired to prevent him from eating, the anorexic will in equally extreme cases have to be hospitalized and force-fed through tubes.

For the true glutton, as for the true anorexic, food may well not be the real problem; the love and hatred of food, when they take on such obsessive energy, doubtless mask deeper problems, distinctive in individual cases. But it is interesting that reactions to food can be a significant symptom in serious psychological disorders. Freud, that suspicious Viennese,

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thought that a great deal more was going on at the table than met the fork. Unquestionably there sometimes is. But I prefer to stand on this question with Cyril Connolly, who put into the mouth of a character in his story "Shade Those Laurels" the lines: "They say that food is a substitute for love. Well, it's certainly a bloody good one."

I like my gluttons mildly obsessive but not compulsive. I prefer to think that in their pursuit of food they are not crying out for attention never given them by a thoughtless mother but instead are trying to duplicate the lovely meals given to them by a thoughtful mother; or, if not that, then I prefer to think they are simply hungry—most of the time. Consider Falstaff, about whose childhood and parentage Shakespeare supplies us with no helpful information. He is perhaps a bit more of a soak than a pure glutton ought to be, but he is otherwise an ideal type, and one who oughtn't to be made to lie still for psychoanalysis. Friar Tuck, Robin Hood's man, is another in the line of delightful fat boys. Let us not neglect, in toting up our serious trenchermen, the monks in Rabelais, whose merest snack could render any forest full of endangered species. The great gluttons of the movies of my boyhood were an Austro-Hapsburgian character actor named S. Z. ("Cuddles") Sakall and Sydney Greenstreet; Sakall played his fat man sweet, as if he were a walking piece of very creamy pastry, while Greenstreet played his menacing, as if he were a hard dumpling that, should it roll over you, could cause serious damage.

The literary hall of avoirdupois has no shortage of tenants. Those two butterballs, G. K. Chesterton and Hilaire Belloc, gain admittance without question. Balzac, who was a bit of a pudge, deserves a place. So, too, does Henry James, who fought weight all his life and, as photographs from his later years reveal, was finally defeated. Mustn't forget Edward Gibbon, that chubby, inelegantly formed little man who wrote only streamlined, elegantly formed sentences. The nineteenth-century French writers Sainte-Beuve, Gautier, Flaubert, and Edmond Goncourt, while not quite Keystone Kops, were nonetheless all nice-sized boys, the result no doubt of those elaborate meals at Magny and other Parisian restaurants. E. R. Curtius has commented on the corpulence of Friedrich Schlegel. Among American writers William Dean Howells and Wallace Stevens were, to put it softly, heavyset. Poor Oscar Wilde emitted such pointed wit from a rather pasty, lumpy body. Evelyn Waugh ended his days with his trousers let all the way out. Edmund Wilson was no flyweight. No shortage of embonpoint among the literati.

But then there are those anorexics of culture who seemed to exist on aperçus and orchids: Ronald Firbank, Aubrey Beardsley, Lytton Strachey, and Proust. As anyone who has read Céleste Albaret's memoir of her employer, dear M. Proust, can tell you, that Proust could be a very picky eater. Still, I believe I should rather have Proust over for dinner than Kafka, who doesn't seem a man easily fed. Yet it may well be that it would be more pleasant to have Kafka for dinner than to go out oneself for dinner at the home of Leonard and Virginia Woolf, whose gaunt looks scarcely suggest that they set a very handsome table. Judging now from their girths and from what is known of their appetites, I shouldn't mind dining, at a table for five, with Samuel Johnson, H. L. Mencken, A. J. Liebling, and Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin. How fine the talk would be! Separate checks, of course.

When an adolescent I used to lunch from time to time with a man who, I estimate, weighed in at roughly 350 pounds. He worked for the father of my friend Roberto. He had all one would expect in the way of jollity from a large and gluttonous man. He called himself the Fat Man. How fat was he? A single detail will suffice for description. In his car he kept an old towel—his *schmatte*, he called it—which, when driving, he laid across his belly to prevent the steering wheel from wearing away his trousers.

The Fat Man was Roberto's and my Falstaff, though it is fairly certain that neither of us will go on to become king of England. Like Falstaff, he commanded a highly colorful vocabulary. When a driver in a car behind him honked, his standard riposte was, "Blow it out your duffel bag, knucklehead." He introduced us to various of the gaieties of the flesh, overeating not least among them. He knew the best inexpensive restaurants in every neighborhood in Chicago. He enjoyed his

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vittles and piled them high upon his plate. He was once described as eating corned-beef sandwiches as if they were cornflakes. He seemed to take minor offense if his luncheon companions failed to eat heartily. Roberto and I did our best never to give offense. "Have another piece of cheesecake, boys," the Fat Man would say, "you owe it to yourself." *You owe it to yourself*—a finer glutton's motto cannot be devised. A philosophy of life is contained in those five short words.

The Fat Man died before the advent of nouvelle cuisine, but I feel confident in my belief that he would have found it, as a serious feeder, laughable. I have eaten perhaps a dozen such meals, all very expensive, and the majority of them, I am pleased to report as a partial excuse, on other people's expense accounts. The dishes to be had in such restaurants, as the carefully coiffed waiters who tell you about them like to say, "make a very nice presentation." I suppose a lot depends upon how hungry one is for a very nice presentation. I have eaten dishes in such restaurants wherein, at moments, I thought I was devouring a Kandinsky or a Frank Stella painting. Then there are those bloodless specials to deal with. "May I tell you about our specials?" the waiter will ask. ("Of course not," an acquaintance with more social courage than I has taken to retorting.) "Chef Yoshie has prepared tonight a delicate terrine made up of twenty-six pâtés and a sausage composed of the spare parts of a 1973 Ford Pinto. We also have medallions of pigeons' heels in a savory hot fudge sauce, with just a hint of tarragon." Something there is about the announcement of those specials that makes a genuinely crapulous man yearn for a bowl of chili and large side order of mashed potatoes.

Worse news: it's spreading. An informed source, as they call them at the *New York Times,* informs me that there is now a nouvelle Mexican restaurant in Dallas. One morning a few years back I was hit by specials at breakfast in San Diego. In my own city, Chicago, theme restaurants have had a long run, and so we have beaneries with such names as Jonathan Livingston Seafood and Lawrence of Oregano. We also have nostalgia dining, with one popular joint got up as a 1950s diner, with waitresses who chew gum, fifties tunes on the jukebox, the whole bit. I am told that the food isn't bad, though I haven't visited it because I fear the place must be chiefly frequented by what I think of as "fun couples."

I prefer my restaurants shorn of fun couples. I don't like restaurants where status is the true entrée, Nor do I want too many vegetarians on the premises. "Vegetarianism is harmless enough," said Sir Robert Hutchison, a former president of the Royal College of Physicians, "though it is apt to fill a man with wind and self-righteousness." I like some burly guys around—eight or ten size 48 suits in the place. I like a restaurant where you can get a virile BLT club sandwich ("one of those American sandwiches, with lots of layers," as an English friend once described it), where they know the meaning of creamy coleslaw, where they serve a significant hamburger. I don't wish to seem more Philistine than I am, but I'm talking about that disappearing commodity—plain but serious grub.

I prefer women, too, to be of hearty appetite, though a gluttonous woman seems to me less than appealing. Samuel Johnson took this thought a step further: "If you once find a woman gluttonous, expect from her very little virtue." The strumpets in *Tom Jones,* in corroboration of Johnson's point, were powerful trencherwomen. Although slender herself, Edith Wharton was a woman with an eye always out for the main course. Certainly in her novels she was attentive to the food her hostesses served, and described food very well. In *The Age of Innocence,* in the character of Mrs. Manson Mingott (oddly enough, herself a stingy hostess), Edith Wharton provided the one hugely fat female character I can think of in American literature:

> The immense accretion of flesh which had descended on her in middle life like a flood of lava on a doomed city had changed her from a plump active little woman with a neatly-turned foot and ankle into something as vast and august as a natural phenomenon. She had accepted this submergence as philosophically as all her other trials, and now, in extreme old age, was rewarded by presenting to her mirror an almost unwrinkled expanse of firm pink and white flesh, in the center of which the traces of a small face survived as if awaiting excavation. A flight of smooth double chins led down to the dizzy depths of a still-snowy bosom veiled in snowy muslins that were held in place by a miniature portrait of the late Mr. Mingott; and around and below, wave after wave of black silk surged away

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over the edges of a capacious armchair, with two tiny white hands poised like gulls on the surface of the billows.

The really fat woman has never been an ideal in Western history, though the zaftig or appealingly buxom woman à la Rubens or Renoir of course has. The past fifteen or twenty years have been hard on women in this regard, for they have been years that, despite all the new freedoms attained, have left women hostage to the look that Tom Wolfe has called "starved to perfection." I have known more than one woman who has sacrificed her good looks through the kind of carrot-and-celery-stick dieting that is required to achieve this look of upper-middle-class emaciation. It was Proust, I believe, who said that, beyond a certain age, most women can retain either the beauty of their figure or the beauty of their face—but they cannot retain both.

This was no very great problem for the wives and mistresses of Louis XIV, who, portraiture makes plain, liked his women zaftig. Dining with Louis, they could scarcely have been otherwise. Although not a fat man himself—he was fortunate in being tall—he was one of history's profound feeders. "His appetite," writes Nancy Mitford in *The Sun King*, "astounded the onlookers and frightened the doctors." Dinners at Versailles, one must allow, were impressive. The king ate, again according to Miss Mitford, "a meal composed of four plates of different soups, a whole pheasant and a whole partridge or chicken or duck (according to what game or poultry was in season) stuffed with truffles, a huge quantity of salad, some mutton, two good slices of ham, a dish of pastry, raw fruit, compotes and preserves." In Louis XIV divine right was reinforced by divine gastronomical might, for he was beautifully equipped for adventures of the table: at his autopsy he was discovered to have a much larger than average stomach and bowels double the normal length.

The Romans were not famous for being dainty feeders; no people who had thought to devise the institution of the vomitorium could have been. The towering glutton among the Roman emperors was Vitellius, who, even on campaign, Suetonius tells us, "always kept a lavish supply of delicacies within reach of his hand." At home he did not dine but banquetted—three and often four times a day. If Vitellius invited himself out, such were his expectations that it rarely cost his hosts fewer than 4,000 gold pieces to set out a table for him. Suetonius notes: "Vitellius paid no attention to place or time in satisfying his remarkable appetite. While a sacrifice was in progress, he thought nothing of snatching lumps of meat or cake off the altar, almost out of the sacred fire, and bolting them down; and on his travels would devour cuts of meat fetched smoking hot from wayside cookshops, and even yesterday's half-eaten scraps." Talk about fast food.

Suetonius cites gluttony and cruelty as Vitellius's two reigning vices. Is there a connection between the two? Many a cruel ruler has been a fat boy—Nero and Henry VIII leap to mind. Unfortunately, the data are missing for even a wild generalization. Yet this much can be risked: the possession of power appears not in the least to slake other appetites, food among them. King Farouk of Egypt was a complete tub. Mao Tse-tung was clearly a man who could make his chopsticks fly. The grandfather of the current Aga Khan carried pro football weight without pro football muscle. William Howard Taft, our twenty-seventh president, was built like two walruses with a single head. After Lenin and until Gorbachev, the Soviet Union has not known a leader of normal girth, which has doubtless contributed to the just fame of Soviet tailoring in the fashion capitals of the world. Attaining power, then, seems to be no satisfactory substitute for the passionate craving for food; it merely gives one a chance to sit down to some real meals.

But I see that I have progressed thus far into this essay without rolling out the sweets trolley. The time has arrived. The sweet tooth is an affliction that leaves some people quite untouched. I am not among these people; neither was Evelyn Waugh, who once called gluttony "the master-passion of boyhood" and who knew that many a glutton sets out on his unappeasable path through a childhood craving for sweets. Writing of his fifth-form visits to The Grub Shop near his public school, Waugh wrote: "No subsequent experience of the haute-cuisine or the vintage can rival the gross, innocent delight in the commonplace

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confections that now began to reappear." The shop offered cakes and buns and ices and chocolates and various whipped-cream contrivances. This sounds quite superior to the sweet fare of my boyhood—about which more directly—but then the English is so much more a tea and tiffin culture than the American. In *A Passage to India* E. M. Forster writes that Aziz "had been warned that English people never stop eating, and that he had better nourish them every two hours until a solid meal was ready." Aziz was well advised, I think, for the English remain, even after the sun has long set on their empire, the world's greatest nation of noshers. What else is an English tea but the nosh regularized and turned into an institution?

The shop across from our grammar school was called Miller's, after its owner, a Jewish immigrant who lived upstairs from it with his wife and daughter. The shop sold a few groceries, some sandwich makings, detergents, school supplies. But its main attraction and, my guess is, its main source of revenue was a glass cabinet three feet high and perhaps ten feet across that sold the most delightful small poisons and tooth destroyers, which went by the name of penny candy. Gums, waxes, licorices, gelatinous and sticky substances in every color and shape were available in that glass cabinet. Before school, at recess, during lunchtime, after school, children pressed up against it, calling out, "Gimme a wax lips, two machine-gun belts, a jujubes, and three Fleers bubble gum." But before Mr. Miller, bending to the cabinet with noticeable effort, could get these things, another kid would demand, "A pack of Bazooka, three jawbreakers, a mustache, and four cents' worth of red licorice whips." Running that shop required the patience of a saint. Mr. Miller, I regret to have to report, didn't have such patience, and so would regularly break down, crying out to the heavens, yelling at a child, occasionally chasing an older boy out into the street. Those sessions could not have lengthened Mr. Miller's life, but I do know that my regular visits to his shop as a boy have continued to enrich an impressive line of my own dental specialists.

An habitué of Miller's I shall not soon forget was a boy of my own age whom I shall call Mick Stone—a name that rhymes with his own true name and that speaks to his considerable bulk, for at the age of thirteen he already weighed in at roughly 190 pounds, or some fourteen stone. He was the first true glutton I had met. A slow-moving and somewhat morose lad, as free from malice as he was from wit, he must have concentrated all his mental energies on thoughts of food. He was no mere theoretician. At recess, over at Miller's, he sprang into action. A cash outlay of a quarter at Miller's in those years—a time when a bottle of soda pop cost a nickel—identified one as a high roller. Mick Stone must have spent nearly a dollar daily. He was a boy who unfailingly put his mouth where his money was. There on the playground he would wolf down a box of twelve doughnuts, or five or six packages of Twinkies and as many Mounds bars, or four Dreamsicles, a full jelly roll, and a simple Butterfinger. Recess, it is important to understand, was only fifteen minutes. Thus fortified, he would return to class, refreshed and free to turn his full attention to thoughts of lunch.

My reaction to the gluttonous Mick Stone was one that combined amazement with vague envy. I knew that as a feeder he was way out of my class; I knew that I didn't want the encumbrance of vast flesh that was only the most evident wage of his particular sin. Still, I envied the fact that he was someone who would have no traffic with moderation. Food is not a thing that easily allows for moderation. Consider ice cream. I know of only two conditions in which I have ever existed with regard to ice cream: I leave the table either not having had enough, or I leave having had too much. Sometimes a single spoonful can make the difference between not enough and too much. Enoughness, in relation to ice cream, is not a state I have known; I am inclined to think it may not exist.

It may be a mistake to attempt moderation in eating. Instead one must make a choice: either to eat away, let 'er rip, and suffer the consequences; or hold back, bail out well before fullness, and also suffer the consequences. I have decided on the latter course, with occasional forays into gluttonous feeding. It seems to me the wiser way, provided I do not go down in an airplane crash, or under the wheels of a truck, or through an arbitrary disease. Meanwhile, the consequences are a

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persistent hunger nibbling away at the edge of my consciousness. I suffer from a condition that not Freud but I have named Entrée Envy: a certain sign of the potential glutton, Entrée Envy involves a quick check at restaurants to make sure that no one at my table has ordered better than I and a feeling of sadness upon discovering that someone else has a fuller and more interesting plate. I also tend to hear the following lines from an old Negro blues tune, which I have rewritten slightly to read:

I may be beautiful but I'm goin' to die some day,
I may be beautiful but I'm goin' to die some day,
So how's about a little feeding before I pass away.

Somerset Maugham, at the beginning of a story entitled "Virtue," tells that, when he was young and poor, he resolved that, if he were to become rich, he would smoke a good cigar every day of his life after lunch and dinner. It is, he claims, the only resolution of his youth that he ever kept. It was also "the only ambition I have achieved that has never been embittered by disillusion." (Freud, that connoisseur of disillusion, was another regular cigar smoker.) Does food bring disillusion? In the same paragraph Maugham talks about oysters and lamb cutlets; and the thought of evolution and the "millions upon millions of years [these] creatures [have taken to] come into existence to end upon a plate of crushed ice or a silver grill," he says, leaves him sad. I must say that the fat man inside me has never had such solemn thoughts. For him life is strictly man eat cutlet and, so to say, no bones about it. And yet . . . and but . . . and still . . . and however . . . disillusion remains after the dessert dishes are cleared. There was all that happiness upon the plate and now it is gone.

I had planned to end this essay with a chronicle of a day in which I let my fat man loose upon the countryside. It was to be a story whose cast included German pancakes and French pastry, pizza and ribs, corn and potato salad, steaks and rich fowl, a small tub or two of sweet butter. I thought I might order two entrées, a thing I have never done. But I find I cannot bring myself to do any of it. The flesh is willing but the spirit is weak. I have been living carefully too long. After such a day, I fear belly vengeance; I see a picture of my wife driving up to an emergency room with me stretched across the backseat, a cool compress across my brow, groaning and pledging repentance.

There is, then, a deep fraudulence at the heart of this essay. While writing it I ate a fruit salad, munched on salt-free crackers, drank the abysmal brew known as diet soda, kept a postcard-size picture of the obese Orson Welles taped to my refrigerator. More shocking to report yet, while writing this essay I actually lost two pounds. Oh civilization! Oh bloody discontents!

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An Author's Mail

BARBARA W. TUCHMAN

PERSONS WHO ADDRESS LETTERS TO THE EDITOR of a newspaper or other journal are usually angry at something that has appeared there and write to express their outrage or dissent, whereas those who write to the author of a book or article generally want to tell the writer of their enjoyment and approval. This is a happy difference, for it is gratifying how often the written word generates a strong emotion in the reader and moves him to express his or her satisfaction, or the reverse, to the unknown and unseen individual behind the pen. Although authors too receive their portion of hate mail, the receipt of letters is encouraging evidence that what they have written has reached into a reader's mind and caused it to take notice and consider the matter at hand or simply enjoy the unfolding of a tale—in short, evidence that the writer's business is performing its function and the product is not left to wither in sterility on a dead page.

Readers' letters can also serve as the visits of distant friends, as in the case of the melancholy ailing refugee, Alexander Lenard, translator of the much admired and wildly successful Latin version of Milne's *Winnie the Pooh:* "I gauge the amount of success by the names of the faraway friends who occasionally visit me with their letters," he wrote to a colleague, "and who saved me a dangerous journey into the outside world I prefer to know in their descriptions."

I, too, have rediscovered through my mail old friends lost along the path of years. A letter I received some time ago opened by reminding me, "We have had no communication for fifty years," which was putting it delicately, for in fact I had not laid eyes on the writer for those fifty years, not since a football game in the Yale Bowl round about 1934, and I was happy to meet him again, if only by mail.

The quality that I have found surprising is the feeling of affection and gratitude, almost, if I dare say so, of love that approving readers seem to feel for the author of a book they have enjoyed. One letter concluded simply with the salutation, "I love you," and another with, "love and gratitude for your essay," and a third with, "May God Bless you." Sometimes it happens in person. On the street the other day, in New

✪ BARBARA W. TUCHMAN won the Pulitzer Prize for *The Guns of August* and for *Stilwell and the American Experience in China, 1911–1945.* Her most recent book is *The March of Folly.*

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York, I turned around at a voice speaking my name and saw a gentleman I did not recognize (doubtless because of my meager memory for names and faces) who told me that during a bout of insomnia last night he had read straight through *Bible and Sword* (my first book) and it had filled the night for him, and that his eighty-six-year-old bedridden father was enjoying himself reading steadily through *A Distant Mirror*. "I must give you a hug," he said, and did so on Vanderbilt Avenue. This affection that pleasure in a book can elicit is odd, but it makes an author feel happy that his book can evoke it.

Readers' own gems are another dividend of their letters. A line that appears in a reader's letter, which I wish I had written myself, is, "the shadow of nuclear war hangs over *The March of Folly* like a ghost from the future." Another good line came from, of all people, the very reactionary William Loeb, publisher of the New Hampshire *Union Leader*. Commenting on the notable lack of leaders in our time, he said that this was due largely to the fact that while we have many brilliant specialists in their own fields, they have "very narrow minds and no common sense."

Because I am subject to fits of discarding collected papers and documents in order to thin out overstuffed files, I am hampered in composing this survey, for there are letters that I remember that I can no longer locate. Reading over those that remain, I find they fall into several distinct categories—most frequent, I am happy to say, are the Pleased who want to tell me of the pleasure that I have given them or that they have taken in some work of mine they have read.

An active category is that of the Cranks who have schemes for saving the world through brotherhood or some form of ecumenism of one kind or another. Here too are the more substantial promoters of causes for saving endangered species, whether it be snail darters or whales or baby seals or national parks and wilderness areas, or for gun control or birth control, or for ensuring or defeating so-and-so's campaign for political office. Alternatively they have schemes for combating the world's iniquities in the form of nuclear warfare, vivisection, acid rain and toxic wastes, beach buggies and snowmobiles. I may be, indeed am, in deep sympathy with most of these goals, but four-to-six-page letters that are typewritten and single-spaced, when the message could be stated in a paragraph, simply waste an author's or anyone's time and are destined for the wastebasket.

To a third category belong the Unfortunates, writing from prison or from an asylum for the insane, who insist they have been wrongfully committed or framed in some way as the object of persecution by some powerful hostile figure in the community. The author is asked to right the wrong by making the truth known to the authorities.

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Prisoners are not generally protesting their incarceration so much as wanting communication and correspondence with the outside world, or else they want your letter of recommendation to the court or parole board for easing of sentence. As they are often very articulate persons with a record of studious accomplishment in prison, one would like to respond, were it not for husbands and lawyers and people like that who sternly warn against getting involved with prisoners, pointing out, reasonably enough, that one does not know what crime they have been committed for, and that correspondence will only draw one into all kinds of trouble. As I was brought up in a world that assumed that husbands and lawyers knew better than I about the wicked ways of the real world, I bow to their rule—except for once or twice when I have replied to prisoners' letters with quite harmless results.

The letters from Unfortunates reflect, I think, a belief that authors of books must be persons of status who can pull wires and exercise influence. One person with that belief did not write but telephoned to tell me a long story about her house and property that had been bequeathed by her deceased husband to their son, but was now, through some wicked machinations, being stolen from him by the executors of her husband's will. I don't know what she expected me—a writer of past history—to do about it or why she called me, and I would have hung up except that I could tell from her voice that she was very, very old and seemingly at the edge of her last effort. The tale, growing steadily more complex, went on and on until in futility I backed away and turned the phone over to my husband, a physician with long experience of wills and executors and practice in calming old ladies. The problem is, what is an author to do when invested in readers' fantasies with influence that she cannot exercise much less possess?

Others of the Unfortunates are victims of special circumstances, like the wife of a Vietnam veteran whose letter I found particularly heart-rending. She wrote that her husband, age thirty-five, was a combat veteran of Vietnam, now "suffering stress" in a VA hospital. "He feels guilt for having killed and for being alive while his buddies are dead. He volunteered for Vietnam out of a sense of patriotism and now has confused feelings. . . ." She had read a newspaper article quoting me as saying (in *The March of Folly*) that "America had lost its virtue" in Vietnam. "How are a Vietnam veteran and his family supposed to feel?" she continued. "Is society and history saying that the veteran himself was immoral or lost his virtue or is responsible for America losing its virtue?" "My husband feels that in the eyes of the world he's a killer and a loser. Have you any words to put into a positive historical perspective for him to help him get on with his life? He is a great reader of history and has read most of your books (I give them to him for his birthdays)."

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Feeling that I was under real obligation to this reader to put whatever I know to use, I took a great deal of thought in composing a reply that would be reassuring to the troubled veteran without excusing the war. I wrote to her that her husband could take satisfaction in having fulfilled his citizen's duty to act, as he had been told, in defense of his country and that at eighteen, as he must have been at the time, he was neither informed nor sophisticated enough to recognize the call as false; that he was caught in the old and insoluble dilemma of the private citizen who is ordered by higher authority or by a commanding officer to do wrong and that as he was in no position to solve a problem that has baffled philosophers and judges through the ages, he need feel no guilt; and finally that for the sake of herself—his wife—and future children, as well as himself, he should feel thankful, not guilty, to be alive. I am afraid I must have given no comfort and failed to hit the right note for I received no acknowledgment.

The sense that authors have powers to put things right need not come from people who have read one's books, but more likely from those who have seen one's name in the papers on the occasion of a speech or award or some public appearance. Indeed there is a class of people who are not readers at all but want only to identify with the author through some personal connection. The epitome of these was the driver of a telephone company repair truck, or maybe it was United Parcel—at any rate, someone who knew our house and neighborhood—who meeting me on the driveway stopped to say, "Oh! Mrs. Tuchman, I am one of your greatest fans." When I voiced the usual thanks for his kind words, he said quite honestly, "Of course, I haven't read any of your books, but I'm a fan." Though it was silly, I was touched by his declaration. It illustrates a curiosity of American life—that the mere condition of being a fan, fanship as one might call it, confers an identity in itself that is apparently craved by many people. It need not have any basis in real appreciation; simply declaring oneself a fan attaches one to a named personality and satisfies the search for a relationship. What is encouraging is that it now evidently reaches for its objects beyond sports figures and rock singers into the book world, even unto authors.

A persistent fan or identifier is a doctor in Texas who once invited me to speak to his club or organization for a Christian endeavor of some kind. I declined. Since then he sends me road maps of his region and periodically telephones long-distance to tell me I must positively take Geritol. I cannot say why he assumes I am anemic, unless that is his explanation for anyone who declines to come to Texas.

A single letter that I cannot place in any category because—fortunately—it had no fellows, was an anonymous envelope containing the cut-off cuff of a woman's coat of smooth flat fur with no message or letter

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attached. It was like receiving Van Gogh's ear and gave me a horrid feeling, as I suppose it was intended to, of some hidden animosity carrying a warning of more to come. We even consulted the police without of course their expressing any interest. I had no idea who sent it, although I had a vague suspicion impossible to verify, but that was the end of it. Nothing more followed.

To come unexpectedly on someone in the act of reading one's book, while it is outside the scope of letters, has the same effect as a letter. Once, coming to the window of a ski-lift ticket booth, I found the girl inside sitting hunched over reading *A Distant Mirror.* Since the staff at ski resorts is generally made up of college students, the ticket seller's readership was not particularly significant; still it was nice to find that rather ponderous book being actually read in a cold cabin on the slopes of Aspen. Less encouraging was the occasion in a bookstore when I saw a customer pick up a copy of *The Zimmerman Telegram* and start to read it. Ah, I thought, I shall actually see someone in the act of buying one of my books. The man read on and on, and just when I decided I couldn't wait any longer, he put the book back on the shelf, regretfully, I like to think, and moved away without buying.

Of unexpected readers, a recent experience occurred when I left a briefcase in a taxi. Told by the Taxi Commission to report place, time, and relevant details to the local precinct police station, I phoned, and on giving my name and address, the police officer said, "Are you the lady who writes those books?" On my admitting the fact, he said, "Those are great books. My Sergeant thinks so too." This time it was I who could have hugged him if we had not been separated by AT&T. Though not a letter, his verbal remark meant I had found readers who would not ordinarily read works of history at all. It was equal in satisfaction to half a dozen D. Litt.'s honoris causa, which is not to say that I do not appreciate those too, but "My Sergeant thinks so too" was something special.

Macaulay tells with relish how when he read his *History of England* aloud to a club of workingmen, many of them wept at his most affecting scenes. I too felt I had reached through to a new audience. Chance remarks such as the police officer's, like letters, give authors the same sense that I suppose actors receive from contact with a live audience.

A sub-category of identifiers are illicit wooers who propose assignations. For some obscure reason these began to appear after the publication of *Stilwell and the American Experience in China, 1911–1945,* my book on General Stilwell. One such letter that I remember came from a man totally unknown to me, who named a particular cabin in the woods he knew of where we could meet for a romantic escapade. This type can hardly be called a category since there were only two or three of them, and I suspect they all came from the same person. I cannot give you any

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juicy quotes because their letters have vanished from my files, no doubt discreetly discarded to keep them from the prying eyes of some future doctoral candidate whose idea of literary criticism or biography is to turn up a scandal in the life of his subject. I have done my best to foil these voyeurs by throwing away all bundles of old correspondence that they might construe into love affairs, as is the style today. Not that my life has been crawling with misconduct, amorous or otherwise, but neither is it an open book. For all nosy investigators I would like to leave it a blank, apart from my published work, which is, after all, what counts.

A category of letters peculiar to historians is the "I was there" correspondent who writes to tell of his own experience on the scene of the author's book, in my case World War I or CBI (the China-Burma-India theater in World War II). Often these contain anecdotes and eyewitness scenes that I wish I had known when I wrote. Veterans of combat, English and American and a few French, write to tell what their fathers or uncles did in the war. One French officer sent me a medal the Germans had minted a trifle prematurely in 1914 to commemorate their expected entry into Paris. He had picked it up in the mud after the battle of the Marne and asked me to keep it as a token of his regard for *The Guns of August* and to leave it to his granddaughter on my death. When she came to see me on a visit to America some years ago, I was happy to be able to complete the transfer as the veteran of the Marne had wished. In England, survivors of the Old Contemptibles, who proudly maintained the name the Kaiser had scornfully applied, also a little prematurely, to the first contingent of the BEF (British Expeditionary Force) to land in France, wrote to me to make me an honorary member. Not so, a group of Merrill's Marauders, veterans of CBI, who threatened to sue for defamation because I had described them, for all their indomitable campaign in Burma, through mud, monsoon, and dysentery to the capture of Myitkyina, in harsh terms that I suppose I should not repeat here lest I be threatened with suit again. Since the words had been taken with accompanying quotation marks from a book by a doctor with Stilwell's troops that had been published by the U.S. Surgeon General's office, it was presumably authoritative. I thought the Marauders might have sued him, not me, but I gather the law works oddly in these matters: spreading rather than originating the objectionable phrase appears to be the offense. I never understood this, especially as the description was taken from an official source, but, as with other male-designed procedures that don't make sense, one should not seek logic.

The threat to sue faded because one of the Marauders turned out to be in civilian life a friend and hospital colleague of my husband and pleaded with him to persuade me to remove the offending phrases from the paperback edition. Though I do not like to surrender to pressure, I

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agreed because it was not essential to the story and I did not want a swarm of wrathful ex-Marauders circling around me like bees. The paperback, if it is yet to be published, is a convenient exit because one can always promise to remove the offense or revise it, which gives the opponent, who probably does not want to go to law anyway, a way out.

Of all my books, the Stilwell biography brought the most correspondence because so many of the participants of CBI were still alive and their letters tended to be lively and informative. One who, like the Marauders, felt maligned was General B., since deceased, a commander whom Stilwell considered incompetent and removed from his staff, recording pitilessly in his diary, "I sent B. to the showers today." I quoted this in my text because the incident fitted into the narrative and was so much Stilwell's style. This too raised a storm. After the war, B.'s incompetence carried him, in obedience to Parkinson's Law, straight up the Washington ladder to an important government post, whence emanated waves of agitation against my book. General B. eventually subsided, leaving a trail of denunciation of me in Far East studies, but he was smart enough, competent or not, to stop short of litigation.

Another category of letter writers is made up of those who feel they have been helped in some way by what they have read. Mostly these responses came from a reading of my essays, collected in *Practicing History*, which described to some extent my own reasons for, and methods of, writing. For a number of would-be authors, who had not known how to begin, these essays seem to unloose the impulse to get started that hitherto had been paralyzed. "It shook me up and brought me back to my senses," wrote a correspondent. "I needed that piece of writing and I keep re-reading parts of it." Another wrote that she had been so deeply embedded in writer's block as to be entirely static and unable to put a word on paper, but that the pieces in *Practicing History* had somehow started her going, and she felt that I had, through that book, "changed her life."

In the "I was there" category, everyone still alive who was caught in Europe in the summer of 1914 when war broke out, from schoolgirls traveling with their mothers to miscellaneous tourists and officials on business, must have written to tell me of his or her adventures. One party, recalled in a six-page, single-spaced typed letter, consisted of two sisters, aged nine and fifteen, who, with their mother, together with her maid and a pet fox terrier, were on their way to Baden-Baden in mid-July where the mother could go through her cure before the opening of the social season. They had with them a variety of trunks—one for hats, one for shoes, others for garments and such fashionable adornments as ostrich feather fans. On July 13, 1914, the last day of peace as it was to

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prove, they were picnicking on a hilltop in the Black Forest when "to our surprise we saw more than a dozen Zeppelins pass overhead across the sky." Supposing some special fiesta or military review must be the occasion, they found, down in the town, all kinds of parades, of soldiers, policemen, and firemen marching with brass bands, and much excitement in the streets. Back at the hotel they were told that all Americans and other foreigners had left the day before and they must try to leave by train at once. The subsequent adventures, with all train schedules disrupted because of mobilization, included departure on foot, without their trunks which they never saw again, a ride in a peasant's hay wagon to a village from where a trolley took them to Lunéville. When the mother, given discouraging answers about the possibility of a train for Paris, asked what would happen "if we are unable to leave here," she was told with a bow and a French flourish, "Ah Madame, then you will have a front row box to view the war tomorrow!" The letter, written to me by the elder of the two sisters, continues with a vivid account of their exodus, full of real-life details that only an eyewitness could tell. At the railroad station they saw flatcars, loaded with the siege guns I described in my book, headed for Belgium; in Paris no one had any information, crowds besieging the American embassy blocked entry, the American Express was closed, food and cash were low, people overflowed the cafés and streets trying to pick up rumors, while through all the discomforts and troubles, "my mother remained without a spot on her clean suede gloves, not a wrinkle on her pale grey summer suit, not a hair deranged under her feathered toque hat. 'My children are gypsies!' she complained because we showed the wear and tear of sitting up all night in the train or sleeping stretched out on the floor of the corridor."

A built-in defect of these letters is that they only arrive after one's book has been written and published, so that they cannot be used for primary material as can a personal memoir or an oral interview or letters found in archives. This is awkward, especially when they correct one's published account, or fill in facts of critical importance I had not known. One of these came from a naval officer, now a captain, who had witnessed the sinking by the Japanese, on a pretense of error, of the American gunboat *Panay* on Yangtze patrol off Nanking in 1937. He tells how huge U.S. flags, made especially for the purpose, had been spread horizontally on large awnings. On December 12, he states, "the sun is approaching its maximum annual declination (south) and Nanking's latitude is 32° (north) so the attacking planes could approach their unsuspecting target in an easy shallow dive of about 35° while keeping the midday sun constantly behind the plane as viewed from the *Panay*. This is exactly what the pilots did. The movie reel of the attack (taken by Norman Soong) clearly showed the *Panay*'s chief gunner's mate man-

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ning one of the gunboat's six 50-caliber mounted machine guns and trying to shield his eyes from the sun with an extended hand. Anyone intelligent enough to pilot a plane knew he was attacking the American flag," my correspondent commented. "There is no room for doubt about this." I love the precise detail and absolute assurance of this letter. It could have made an indisputable statement in my text for the future sillies who like to claim that Roosevelt somehow manipulated the poor innocent Japanese into the war.

On that same subject, another letter came from one of the operators of "Purple," the decoding machine that broke the Japanese code. The writer reproved me for stating that the American fault at Pearl Harbor had been a failure of communication. "The high command," he wrote, "had ordered Admiral Kimmel and General Short in Hawaii to put their commands on 'war alert' which was all they could be told without betraying the priceless source of the intelligence. It was up to these officers to obey and this they did not do. Kimmel and Short were simply derelict in their duty. This was not a failure of communication. So much nonsense had appeared about FDR trying to get us into the war, that I wanted to add my bit."

Equally expert in his specialty was a gentleman in England who, jointly with two fellow specialists in the history of woodworking tools, questioned my reference in *A Distant Mirror* to the brace and bit as a development of the late thirteenth century. "The evolution of brace and bit," he explained, "is one of the major problems of our little specialty, the earliest evidence being an altarpiece of 1424." Goodness! All unwittingly I had stumbled into a major problem of medieval technology. The writer himself was, as he put it, the record holder, having traced an illustration of a brace back to a French wine-merchant's seal of 1407. In the most polite way he asked for my reference to the thirteenth century, which "if it turns out to be based on a misapprehension," he kindly added, "will not affect the general point you are making in the broad sweep of your excellent narrative." As this was remarkably gentle for an Englishman addressing an American woman writer, a twice disadvantaged condition, I was determined to satisfy him, but I felt uneasy about that brace and bit. I went up to Cambridge where my research notes and manuscript for the book were deposited in the Houghton Library at Harvard and hunted through the notes until I found, to my dismay, although not to my surprise, that the book which had been my source had not in fact dated the tool's first appearance. I had read so much about the technological advances of the late thirteenth century that in listing some of them I must have mentally included the brace and bit without checking, as sometimes happens. I confessed to the English gentleman the "misapprehension" that he had already

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surmised. Now, when too ready to assume a fact without checking, I think of the brace and bit and take extra care.

CBI veterans wrote me numerous letters, many carrying distinguished names. General James Gavin sent me an anecdote of the Burma frontier—how Stilwell "dropped by a remote little post and after inspection, when the garrison fell in to hear the expected Speech always made by visiting generals about our Noble Cause, our Noble Allies and what a privilege it was to risk prickly heat and dhobi's itch for Democracy, Stilwell didn't. He just grinned at his sweaty and disheveled troops and remarked, " 'I'm sure glad I'm not stuck way out here in the jungle like you poor dumb bastards.' Before dark the men had put up a sign rechristening their post Dumbastapur—a name the local tribesmen adopted thereafter." Actually I don't know how I missed that story in writing the book because it was a well-known incident, but I think General Gavin was on duty somewhere when I was doing the research and I failed to see him for an oral interview.

The late Senator Kenneth Keating of New York, subsequently American Ambassador in New Delhi, wrote several times saying the book "made me nostalgic about the days I used to fly over the Hump and arrive to be greeted by the smiling pick-pocketing Chinese." He paid me the best compliment, when apropos of what he called my "insight into the events of the CBI theater," he said, "It is as if you had been here in person. My contact with some of the holy men of India leads me to believe you were here somewhere hiding in the bushes. I wish I had known it!" he added gallantly. The letters from CBI veterans were on the whole, except of course for Merrill's Marauders, very appreciative in saying that I had got it right and told it as it was, which is what a historian most wants to hear. When one correspondent wrote that he had been comparing the book to his own memories of his service in CBI and found it accurate in each case, I felt I was doing my job.

One also likes appreciation of one's prose, or at least I do because the art of writing concerns me as much as the subject matter. It was a CBI veteran, too, who wrote to say the Stilwell book was "a masterpiece and beautifully written," in what he called "the good old American idiom." I am not quite sure what he had in mind, but I took it as meaning what, in fact, I always try for—that is, clear easy-reading prose that avoids the Latinized language of academics with their endless succession of polysyllables, their deaf ear for sentence structure, and unconcern for clarity. A former Marine who classed himself as an Old China Hand told me that he had read the Stilwell book "right through in 36 hours," which I take also to be a tribute to clarity of prose, as it is when people write to say they have been reading one of my books aloud to each other. They are "pure pleasure to read" wrote a husband who had been reading *The*

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March of Folly aloud to his wife, "because you write like an angel." I am embarrassed to quote this kind of thing, but approval is what makes readers want to write letters. If this survey has become too unbearably self-congratulatory, I hope you will forgive and understand that, like ketchup on hamburgers, it comes with the subject.

Hate mail, on the contrary, in my experience comes, as might be expected, from Jewish issues. A flood of hostility descended in response to a piece I wrote under the title "They Poisoned the Wells," published in *Newsweek* as one of their series called "My Turn." It told how the Black Death in the Middle Ages was blamed on Jews who were alleged to have poisoned the wells, although, as the Pope of the day pointed out, they died like everyone else. The point I was making—that in confused and fearful times when people want to fix blame, the Jews will be the target—seemed to anger many in the Gentile community. Why, I don't know, because the idea is hardly new or original and threatens no one. The several score of letters I received, however—virtually all unsigned, for people who vent their prejudices have evidently neither the courage nor the conviction to sign their names—gave me quite an experience of being hated rather than admired or loved.

Students belong to a category of people who want help. For purposes of a term paper or report for the school newspaper, they always want to know, as a high-school boy wrote, "How you got to writing books like *The Guns of August* and *The Zimmerman Telegram*. Before I get this answered, how did you get started writing books period?" My replies are probably inadequate. I just tell them I started to write because I wanted to write; that was what I wanted to do. I am sure this does not satisfy, but I do not like to pose as an example. My feeling is that people whose urge to do something is strong enough to make it worth doing will go ahead and do it without need of an example.

One can make allowance for students, but I find it irritating when adults write to ask the source of some piece of information that plainly appears in my reference notes or who want me to list books for them to read in pursuit of a given subject. Why can't they find out for themselves? Have they never heard of libraries? And why do they never consult my own bibliography, which, from what I can tell, they never do? Are most people so passive they want everything done for them? If one does not enter into the research process oneself, one learns nothing.

Judging by letters, I think the greatest interest I ever aroused was not by a book but by an article, "The Decline of Quality," published in the *New York Times Magazine* in November 1980. "It was a tonic," in the words of one reader, "to those of us discouraged about America." Another who wrote that it "touched a sensitive nerve" must have been right, for the letters kept coming in every day's mail with the most

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extravagant compliments. "It had the quality of a Turner painting," according to one. Though I adore Turner, if there is one thing my writing is not, it is Turneresque. If it is to have comparison to a painter, I would like to think it might be Stubbs or perhaps Chardin—factual, straightforward, and clear, with passages of poetry to add charm. "You belong," another writer wrote, happily paraphrasing Cole Porter's song "You're the Top," "with Gothic cathedrals, Matisse and Seattle Slew." A less enraptured correspondent stated calmly that the article "was above the average." A Harvard professor scolded because I had written that technological marvels like microchips and the electronic wonders of the computer, no matter how high in quality, belonged to a different order of things than the creative works of the humanities. "I stopped reading right there," he announced. I cannot blame him because, although humanities is what I meant, I had in fact written, "the creative works of civilized society." It was one of those awful situations when one cannot think of the right word and in frustration one substitutes something unsuitable, which is *not* writing like an angel. Appearing at the time of Reagan's first election to the presidency, "The Decline of Quality" caused a Californian to write, "On election night I was very depressed and went to bed early picking up the *Times* magazine section on the way—what a relief to read your article. It immediately helped me out of my depression." What more could a writer want? "Gadflies," this correspondent added, "are never popular but they influence history and lift the spirits of the discouraged."

As opposed to correctors of error are the soul-mates, so to speak, who experience that special delight of finding the author agreeing with what they already think. "It so fits my own thoughts," wrote a veteran of Vietnam about *The March of Folly*, "that I believe totally your account of the Vietnam war. I will now," he concluded bravely, "read the rest of the book."

Similar to soul-mates are the propagators, readers so enthused by what you have written that they want to spread your words abroad. A mother wrote about "The Decline of Quality" that she had copied out my definition of quality and intended to inscribe it "on the walls of her children's bedrooms" and more important, she said, "force it on the attention of their school teachers." Of the same article the lawyer who wrote that it had "struck a sensitive nerve" added that it "impelled us to circulate a photocopy of it to our entire legal and paralegal staff." An executive of the Revlon Company took the opportunity "to pass it along to members of the merchandising staff," while another executive extracted several sentences from the piece, which he was going to put in poster form to use in his office. An even more active propagator was a magazine publisher who actually sent, or said he had, twelve hundred

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copies of *The March of Folly* to what he called "high echelon business people throughout America." A similar enthusiast wrote of that book, "What a wonderful service you have rendered the nation. Your new book influences our affairs more than anything written since *Uncle Tom's Cabin.*" While generously exaggerated, that was almost as good as comparison to Seattle Slew.

An article I wrote since then on responsibility for the Marines' deaths in Lebanon caused a propagator to send it to President Reagan and a senator to insert it in the Congressional Record. Commenting on the Lebanon piece, a friendly fan in Seattle wrote just to wish me "a beautiful autumn in Connecticut." A more recent piece entitled "Are We Smart Enough for Our Technology" was published in the *Christian Science Monitor,* whose editor revised the title, as editors will with their special talent for taking the punch out of authors' titles, into the bland heading "Reflections on Today's Scene." It carried nevertheless enough meaning to a reader for her to advise that it should be "required reading for all politicians, government officials, clergymen, teachers, students and citizens old enough to vote." That is quite inclusive, but no more so than the audience suggested for *The March of Folly* by a reader who thought it should be read by "everyone in the world." Modestly, that was my own opinion for I have always thought the theme of this book to be more important than the critics, who jumped on it with both feet, understood. In fact *The March of Folly* illustrates an interesting phenomenon of publishing—the discrepancy that often appears between critics and readers. The critics, as it seemed, had their tomahawks out in advance, because, according to my publisher, "you have just had too much success, Barbara, and that's when they want to pull you down." Readers, I am happy to say, evidently follow their own inclination with little attention to critics. They read and liked and bought the book sufficiently to circulate it by word of mouth and keep it on the best-seller list for six months, which, considering the reviews, was not bad, though not comparable to *A Distant Mirror,* which, curiously enough for a book on a subject no one would expect to be widely popular, sold the most of all my books, puncturing the axiom that a book's fortunes depend on the *New York Times.* The *New York Times* as it happened was on strike when that book came out and never published any review, yet *A Distant Mirror* took off like a sex manual or like a diet-and-fitness volume by Jane Fonda. The point about books is that you never can tell and even astute publishers cannot predict. Readers know best, which is just as well because it is they, after all, for whom we write, and their letters are the test.

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I Am Dancing with My Mennonite Father

ANNE-RUTH EDIGER BAEHR

We dance a carnival ride:
you try to make me feel
in your arms the thrust and turn
of the Ferris wheel, to give me
at last that ride I wanted long ago,
that you denied because you saw
my small body sway to gypsy rhythm,
my feet move in forbidden ways.

Under trellises we dance the leaves
I pinned on my friends' costumes
in third grade—*Welcome, Sweet*
Springtime—the garlands
I helped the teacher place
on their heads, backstage.

"It is all right," you say,
and I see how young you are,
how your damp hair curls.
But this is my fantasy. I should
tell you it is all right now.
I am no longer eight years old

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in my modest dress watching you
in your black suit at the classroom
door tell the teacher I am not
allowed to dance.

You move back to see my silhouette
against the light. "It is all right,"
I say, wind moving the sheer, forbidden
gown—all right to look at the outlines
of my body, to tell me by your smile
that other men will find me beautiful.

We dance all gossamer things,
not even trying to keep our feet
on the ground. You whisper now,
as you never did, "You're lovely,
and strong," spin me down patio steps
to the path, let me go.

ANNE-RUTH EDIGER BAEHR is co-editor of *Xanadu* magazine. Her poems have appeared in *Four Quarters, West Hills Review, Mennonite Life,* and other periodicals. "I Am Dancing with My Mennonite Father" is the winner of the fourth Mary Elinore Smith Poetry Prize. The $200 prize is given in memory of Miss Smith by her family and friends. Mary Elinore Smith, who died in 1981, was an editor of THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR.

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Lucky

MICHAEL BLUMENTHAL

Off to the market to buy a lottery ticket,
I consider the possibilities of luck: good luck,
bad luck, beginner's luck, hard luck, the luck
of the draw, and realize I am lucky, in fact,
to be here at all, along this benignly lit street
on a night in October, as luck would have it,
and I know that it's not just the luck of the Irish,
but any man's, to walk the streets of his town,
beneath the shapely moon, and ponder
the dumb luck that brought him there, against
all odds, out of the vast lottery of minnow
and ovum, and that he has once again lucked out,
this very night, spent as it has been
without accident or incident, a small testimonial
to the quietudes that are still possible,
the only half-felt wish for some grand stroke
of luck that will change everything, that will
change, really, nothing at all, our lives being,
in some sense at least, beyond the vicissitudes
of luck and longing, the night being lovely,
the day finite, many of those we know whose luck
has already run out, and we not yet among them,
thank the beneficence of Lady Luck:
our lucky stars just now flickering into flame
as the night lucks in.

MICHAEL BLUMENTHAL is the Briggs-Copeland Lecturer in Poetry at Harvard University. His two most recent books are *Days We Would Rather Know* and *Laps*, winner of the 1984 Juniper Prize.

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Remembering World War II

The Perspective of the Losers

JAMES D. WILKINSON

THE FORTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ALLIED VICTORY in Europe—with its ceremonies, speeches, and busloads of tourists converging on the battle sites—reminds us how readily memories of wartime events become fixed in ritual. Yet not all memories lend themselves to patriotic apotheosis in such an unproblematic way. For the generation of Europeans who lived through World War II, whether as civilians or as combatants, the temptation to forget has frequently proven stronger than the urge for remembrance. In France, Germany, and Italy, especially, the past has an uncomfortable feel that discourages prolonged contact. British or Soviet citizens may celebrate the war as a heroic confirmation of national worth; Frenchmen, Italians, and Germans cannot. For different reasons, each country has discovered that the unifying myth that might restore a measure of pride in its past cannot be constructed from those events without considerable sleight of hand.

Thus we find the question of *how* the war should be remembered a topic of continuing debate in France, Germany, and Italy during the four decades since the war's end. Among the broad spectrum of responses to this issue, the most uncompromising has consisted of an attempt to confront the nation with an accurate record of the war years in the hope of achieving justice and prompting reflection and repentance. Its spokesmen have included intellectuals, former Resistance activists, and some members of the clergy, all of whom have tended to see the issue primarily in moral terms. On the other hand, there have been those who feared the divisive effects of such a confrontation and who sought instead to salvage national pride from a traumatic and deeply troubling past. Prominent in this group have been political leaders, among them some with excellent Resistance credentials (Charles de Gaulle comes to mind) and conservatives moved more by the demands of *raison d'état* than by an abstract respect for truth. Finally, by far the largest group has shown a desire to ignore the past altogether. Faced with the necessities

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of making a living and getting along with one's neighbors, many Europeans have preferred stubborn forgetfulness. In a sense, the two former groups have been at pains to convert the third to their views, with the result that postwar European literature, films, journalism, and popular culture alike bear the traces of the struggle between the wish to inform and the wish to tamper with the past.

During the postwar period, three major phases may be distinguished in the debate over how the war should be remembered, if at all, in France, Italy, and Germany. Though the issues varied somewhat from country to country, the sequence and timing of general changes in attitude are remarkably similar. The initial phase, which lasted from the coming of peace until the mid-1950s, brought what might be termed "shock treatment" on the part of those demanding a direct confrontation with the past, and widespread refusal to accept this treatment on the part of its intended beneficiaries. A middle phase extended from the mid-1950s until the late 1960s, during which those intent on forcing the war into public consciousness adopted more indirect means to convey their message or else withdrew from the debate for a time. This decade and a half also saw the rise of what Stanley Hoffmann has called an "official history" of the war in France and Italy—one that succeeded in substituting a more palatable myth of the war for bitter memories. Finally, from the late 1960s onward, this official myth in turn came to be challenged more and more openly by the company of critics, while the general public quite unexpectedly proved receptive to a re-examination—however tentative and limited—of the past whose memory they had long sought to evade.

I

In retrospect, those who favored an immediate and unsparing account of national sins during the first months of peace in 1944–45 tended both to underestimate the judicial difficulties involved and to overestimate the readiness of their countrymen to accept the evidence of war crimes. A loose coalition of anti-Fascist intellectuals, newly installed officials, and (in Germany) representatives of the Western Allies during the years 1945–49 initially pursued what they felt to be the parallel aims of justice and education. In the end, they achieved neither. It was not simply that many Frenchmen, Germans, and Italians feared to examine their own measure of guilt or complicity for what had so recently occurred. Even those most disposed to believe the evidence before them could scarcely comprehend its true dimensions. The horror of mass arrests and deportations, as well as the sheer number of victims and battle casualties, strained the capacity for empathy or understanding.

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This problem had been foreseen by Arthur Koestler, who published a prescient article in the British magazine *Horizon* a year before the war's end. There he noted:

> A dog run over by a car upsets our emotional balance and digestion; three million Jews killed in Poland cause but moderate uneasiness. Statistics don't bleed; it is the detail which counts. We are unable to embrace the total process with our awareness; we can only focus on little lumps of reality.

Much-publicized trials of war criminals in France, Germany, and Italy after 1945 produced many volumes of eye-witness testimony but few "lumps of reality," and no national awakening of conscience on the anticipated scale. Attempts to depict the war in film or fiction, such as Wolfgang Borchert's short stories of 1946–47, Roberto Rossellini's film *Open City* (1945), and Robert Merle's *Week-end à Zuydcoote* (1949), met with applause in intellectual circles but with little popular success. Education, it soon became clear, required the willingness to learn—and not simply the desire to instruct.

Confronted by the ruins, cold, and hunger of the immediate postwar years, most citizens saw survival as a challenge that left time for little else. Some viewed their suffering as atonement for wartime sins; others indulged in self-pity from the start. Still others began gradually to fabricate a new, more flattering account of their activities during the Fascist era and the war years simply to keep their jobs. One of the unintended and ironic effects of postwar purges carried out with varying degrees of severity in postwar France, Germany, and Italy was to encourage hundreds of thousands of people with a compromising past to rewrite their biographies for presentation to a judge or a commission of inquiry. Such grass-roots tampering with the historical record, rationalized by the need to support one's family, gradually became accepted as truth even by the authors, and thus posed an additional obstacle to the recovery of the past. Nor was the temptation to alter events confined to the guilty. Even those with an unimpeachable Resistance record felt moved on occasion to romanticize their underground struggle and to view its cruder realities through the distorting lens of nostalgia. As early as 1947, the Italian writer Italo Calvino, himself a Resistance veteran, protested against "the high priests of a sanctified and sweetened Resistance" who, he felt, were transforming its memory beyond recognition.

Through the 1950s, the work of rebuilding Europe itself served as a diversion from confronting the past. Clearing rubble and erecting new city buildings erased the evidence of wartime destruction in a direct, physical sense, while also focusing thoughts and energies on the future. The Cold War provided a similar diversion: the public could now direct

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its fears and hatreds at the Soviets or the Americans rather than at former Fascists. Anti-communism, a staple of Fascist and Nazi propaganda, acquired a new legitimacy in the climate of growing East-West antagonism, thus providing a retrospective justification, some felt, for Hitler's decision to attack the Soviet Union. Not a few unrepentant former Nazis noted privately but bitterly that they had been right all along.

The intellectuals' initial response to this series of checks and disappointments was gradually to abandon the tactic of confrontation. But this did not mean dismissing the war as a topic of concern. Instead it often signified a new choice of means in what was now acknowledged to be a protracted and difficult educational enterprise, conducted against the wishes of a sullen, hostile public. What course of action should they now adopt? For most people, tending the flame of memory within one's own circle replaced efforts at education as the most pressing—and most realistic—goal for the immediate future. Groups of Resistance veterans such as the French Compagnons de la Libération or groups of survivors such as former concentration camp inmates held regular meetings, distributed newsletters, and maintained networks of mutual support among themselves. The academic community, too, turned inward. Historians in particular found the war to be a congenial topic for research and documentation, though they at first showed little concern with making their results available or comprehensible to a wider public. During the years 1950–55, the first scholarly journals and research institutes devoted chiefly to World War II and the Third Reich began to appear. The French *Revue d'Histoire de la Deuxième Guerre Mondiale* published its inaugural issue in 1950, followed by the series *Esprit de la Résistance* in 1955. In Germany, the Institut für Zeitgeschichte first issued its quarterly review on recent German history in 1953, while in Italy a team of historians began assembling research materials at a kindred establishment, the Istituto Storico della Resistenza Italiana, based in Milan.

Compared with the outpouring of tendentious and self-serving diplomatic history following the end of World War I, in which each of the belligerents attempted to shift responsibility for the war's outbreak onto another, the products of this second postwar examination of conscience displayed a greater freedom from nationalistic bias and a higher standard of scholarship. When the Khrushchev era brought a lessening of Cold War tensions within the academic community toward the end of the decade, both conservative and left-wing historians alike edged toward a consensus in all three countries concerning the major outlines of the war. The Italian historian Guido Quazza noted in retrospect that this "second phase" of research increasingly revealed "a greater attentiveness to methodological constraints, a more immediate interest in the

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international context, and a far more varied, ample, and direct consultation of the documents."

In the realm of literature and the arts, however, the tendency to abandon the war as subject matter grew as the decade advanced. Only in Germany did literary efforts to convey the war experience continue through the 1950s with the work of Heinrich Böll, Hans Werner Richter, Alfred Andersch, and other authors associated with the Group 47; even they elected more often to concentrate on a critique of postwar German attitudes than on the war itself. In France and Italy, on the other hand, the retreat from war themes was widespread, coinciding with the gradual abandonment of the graphic neo-realist style that had characterized the immediate postwar period. In place of the eye-witness accounts that had made novelists, in George Orwell's words, the "unofficial historians" of the previous two decades, came a more indirect, experimental treatment of the themes of time and memory itself. The works of Italo Calvino, who moved from chronicles of the Resistance in *The Path to the Nest of Spiders* (1947) to his fables and fairy tales of the 1950s, demonstrate this transition clearly. So does the work of the French film director Alain Resnais. In 1956, Resnais released one of the last and most impressive documentaries inspired by the urge to publicize the atrocities of World War II. *Night and Fog* remains to this day one of the most powerful evocations of Auschwitz (and is still occasionally shown to American college classes studying the Holocaust). Yet when Resnais returned to consider the topic of the war's human cost three years later in *Hiroshima mon amour* (1959), his message was considerably more tentative, his moral stance more complex. The film concentrated not on guilt and the need to remember, but on the impossibility of certain knowledge and the inescapable loss of both memory and love. What begins as a cinematic montage of scenes from devastated Hiroshima ends with the French heroine's confession to her Japanese lover: "I will forget you; I forget you already."

By the mid-1950s, the pattern had emerged that would continue to characterize the general European attitude toward the war as an issue of public concern until the end of the 1960s. The partisans of truth remained sequestered in voluntary self-confinement; "official history" slowly gained ground. The public, in turn, began to abandon its stance of willful ignorance and instead adopted a vision of the war years shaped by its desire to create a new, more comforting past. The precise form that this past assumed differed, as might be expected, from one country to the next. Yet whether in France, Italy, or Germany, those who wished to provide the nation with a patriotic myth to replace the memory of war found ready acceptance among the public at large. "Official history"—propagated through political speeches, the *bien-pensant* press, the

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school curriculum—appeared ready to supplant true history in the minds of all but a few.

II

Since the advent of mass education in the late nineteenth century, most modern nations have of course attempted to inculcate a version of their collective pasts that might be termed "official history." Its chief function is to promote a sense of patriotic duty and to inspire national self-respect through a series of carefully selected heroes (and, more rarely, heroines) and monitory tableaux. Founders, leaders, benefactors, and martyrs are commemorated on holidays, eulogized in speeches, and studied in schools, thereby becoming exemplars for the citizen in search of values or an identity. He or she shares something with these heroes, if only a common homeland, and hence views their deeds as a source of personal pride. War, in turn, is a privileged arena for much official history—a heroes' nursery that over the centuries has provided many of the most enduring figures in the national pantheon. Typically, wartime has been celebrated as a moment of testing, when a nation and its soldiers revealed their true worth in the sight of all.

The manner in which World War II has passed into the official history of Great Britain and the Soviet Union—both clear victors at the war's end—shows its power to provide just such a tonic for national myth. The spirit of Dunkirk, the Battle of Britain, the siege of Leningrad, and the Battle of Stalingrad are still to this day emotionally charged terms, calling forth a genuine, uncomplicated pride among most Englishmen and Russians. For them, the war takes on the classic narrative shape of the adventure story. The hero is the nation itself, fighting for its survival. At first, the hero is set upon by an unscrupulous foe, who manages to inflict an initial, though temporary, defeat on his victim. Yet, rather than succumb, the injured nation calls on superior moral strength and patriotic effort and, in the darkest hour of its history, opposes force with force until it secures the final victory to which its courage and suffering entitle it. (The United States, one might add, subscribes to a version of World War II that conforms to this same general pattern. In that history, Pearl Harbor, "a day that will live in infamy," is avenged on the Normandy beaches and at the Battle of Midway.) There is no need to conceal initial mistakes or weakness on one's own side; within limits, they serve to enhance the magnitude of the final triumph and testify to the moral innocence of the eventual victor, who had not prepared for war.

The French official history circulating during this period from the mid-1950s to the late 1960s offers the closest parallel to the British and Soviet myths of the war. Here, too, we find an account that shows an

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innocent country attacked by its wicked foe, see initial reverses redeemed by a discovery of new strength and unity, and savor triumph as the invader is expelled at last. Yet unlike Great Britain and the Soviet Union, France had surrendered to Hitler shortly after hostilities began in earnest in the spring of 1940, and remained under direct or indirect German rule during the four succeeding years. The modest French resistance to Nazi domination that did gradually spring up among the populace remained politically fragmented, militarily weak, and confined to a minority. Official history transformed this resistance into "the Resistance," with a capital *R*, a mass phenomenon that bridged the awkward gap between the armistice of 1940 and the Normandy landings of 1944. The Resistance, it was claimed, enjoyed at least tacit support from all but a tiny group of Fascists. Having been overwhelmed in the initial German onslaught, the nation needed to buy time and restore its strength. This it did by pursuing a double strategy; de Gaulle and Pétain played complementary roles as "the sword and the shield." Those who supported Pétain, official history alleged, did so in the full knowledge that he was temporizing until the tide of war had turned in France's favor; meanwhile, he was sheltering Jews and other potential victims from the Gestapo and saving France's resources from the predatory grasp of Berlin.

The persuasiveness of the Resistance myth thus elaborated by official history lay in its explanation of French passivity. Moral support for the fatherland in an occupied country could not be displayed openly. It was tempting for many of the French to feel after the fact that they had supported de Gaulle in their hearts, but prudently refrained from revealing their true loyalties in daily life. They enlisted themselves retrospectively in the ranks of those *agents doublement clandestins* whose Resistance activities were so cleverly concealed that they remained undetected by the French underground as well as by the Germans. De Gaulle sought to heal the divisions left by four years of virtual civil war when he declared shortly after the liberation that "France needs all its sons and daughters." The myth of the Resistance furthered the goal of national unity, and it was seldom challenged in government quarters for that very reason.

In Italy, too, the Resistance was credited with expelling the Germans at the war's end; here, too, the country's cooperation with its northern neighbor during the years 1940–43 was passed over in silence. For many Italians, it was as if World War II had begun in August of 1943, when Mussolini was deposed by his own Fascist council, and Germany, not the Western Allies, became the enemy. In the story of Italy's gradual and hard-won liberation from German invaders presented by official history, one can see another common feature of national myths at work: the

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attempt to portray history as cyclical. Just as Stalin in his wartime propaganda reminded Russians of Napoleon's disastrous invasion a century and a quarter earlier and asserted that Hitler would fare no better, so the Italians invoked the Risorgimento of the 1860s as a presage of Hitler's defeat. What had been a successful struggle against the Austrians, spurred by the patriotism of Garibaldi's thousand red-shirts and the popular thirst for freedom became transmuted into a second Risorgimento, enhanced by a luster borrowed from the past.

In dealing with the period before 1943, the Italian version of official history tended to make Mussolini responsible for everything: the decision to go to war in 1940, Italy's subsequent defeats in Greece and North Africa, the persecution of Jews and dissidents. The French indulged in similar scapegoating when they blamed the Germans for the evils of the occupation. The Germans followed this pattern in turn as they viewed the war from the relative safety of the 1950s. Had Hitler himself not insisted on the "leadership principle" that granted him the ultimate authority to shape the Reich's destinies? The dictator's formal powers, which far exceeded his ability to control men and events in practice, were invoked time and again to absolve his subordinates from responsibility.

Yet, whereas the French and the Italians managed to mount a salvage operation on selected aspects of the past, rescuing what could still prove serviceable for the cause of national unity and self-esteem, the Germans' abilities to exploit even this slender opportunity were far more limited. The few undoubted heroes and heroines of the anti-Nazi Resistance themselves became the object of dispute between East and West Germany. The German Democratic Republic argued that principled opposition to the Nazis had come from the ranks of the workers alone, while the Federal Republic emphasized the military-aristocratic resistance embodied in Hitler's would-be assassin, Claus Schenk von Stauffenberg, hanged for his attempted bombing of the Führer's headquarters in July 1944.

Rather than finding solace in myth, many Germans therefore sought refuge in silence. They denied not only responsibility for the past but, more important, knowledge of the past as well. If we consider for a moment what the recent war had actually meant to millions of Germans—three years of uninterrupted conquests from 1939 to 1941, a sense of belonging to the Master Race, a chance to erase the shame of Versailles and exact vengeance on all those groups within Germany that had aroused their fear and hatred during the Weimar era—then the emotional effort required to suppress all memory of the war can be appreciated. Only German suffering in wartime escaped this ban; it received occasional public mention before associations of refugees who

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had lost their homes in the East, or at dedication ceremonies for new buildings in bombed-out city centers.

Since Germany was the country least able to deal with its wartime memories, even in mythic form, it is not surprising that during the late 1950s and 1960s we find the greatest interest among German intellectuals in breaking through this shell of silence. Their primary aim was not to correct a distorted view of the past but to promote discussion of the past in any form whatsoever. Abandoning the frontal attack of the previous decade but unwilling to acknowledge the impossibility of reclaiming the memory of the war years permanently and fruitfully, as Resnais appeared to do, a number of writers attempted to overcome the public's resistance by resorting to humor, allegory, and other strategies of indirection.

Perhaps the best-known example is Günter Grass's novel *The Tin Drum* (1959), which portrays German history during the Third Reich and the postwar era from the perspective of an outsider—the dwarf narrator, Oskar—with the help of satire, the grotesque, and complex symbolism. Grass is careful to ensure that the past never becomes too threatening to his German readership; Oskar's credibility as a narrator is repeatedly questioned, and Nazi characters are more often pathetic failures than true villains. At the same time, however, *The Tin Drum* links the fate of its characters with the real events of Hitler's Reich and war. They march, fight, and suffer along with the rest of Germany. The last third of the novel (omitted in Volker Schlörndorff's recent movie adaptation) also deals obliquely with the price of suppressing all memory of the past. Oskar, having survived the war, now plays his drum as a jazz musician in a fashionable Düsseldorf nightclub, whose patrons come to have their emotions stimulated by a simple natural substance:

> What did the onion juice do? It did what the world and the sorrows of the world could not do: it brought forth a round, human tear. It made them cry. At last they were able to cry again. To cry properly, without restraint, to cry like mad.

The theme of emotional impoverishment through denial of the past is the central theme of another characteristic German work of this period: the psychoanalytic study by Doctors Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich entitled *The Inability to Mourn* (1967). Their message was that the past continued to haunt Germany and could be exorcised only by at last dismantling "the unbending defense against memories, especially the block against emotional involvement with the events of the past." Using case studies culled from their own clinical practice, they asserted that German psychological recovery from the war had been arrested in far too many instances by the fear of facing the truth. Silence was so

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widespread a phenomenon because German guilt remained so deep-seated. Even West German maps, the Mitscherlichs noted, did not recognize the country's eastern borders as settled and final, but instead referred to "German territory under Polish administration." It was as if wishful thinking could arrest time's passage and erase the effects of Germany's defeat, as if the war could be declared a mistake and the country could once again resume its prewar existence, safe behind the boundaries of 1937.

III

By the late 1960s, there appeared signs that the national syndrome diagnosed by the Mitscherlichs was gradually being overcome. Now began the third, and in many ways most interesting, phase of general European attitudes toward the war. This change suggested a new willingness to forsake the familiar landscape of myths, martyrs, and silence on the part of many who had hesitated to venture beyond its limits during the past twenty years.

What explains this new willingness to confront the past? As is true for any broad historical phenomenon, its sources were multiple and mutually reinforcing. A greater sense of material security played a major role. The half decade preceding the OPEC oil embargo of 1973 proved a time when new questions could be asked because old problems appeared resolved thanks to the "economic miracle" of postwar recovery. The robust gains registered by the European economy, though not equally shared by all, nevertheless helped generate a general pride and self-confidence that rendered a return to unresolved matters from the past less threatening. In the political realm, 1969 saw the beginnings of Chancellor Willy Brandt's *Ostpolitik* in West Germany, leading in 1971 to a final recognition of the new boundaries in the East as permanent. The late 1960s brought student unrest in Paris and throughout much of Western Europe that had as one consequence a new and aggressive questioning among the young concerning politicians' and parents' activities during the war. Their interest was in part a political weapon that could be used to discredit figures of authority, but also in part a product of simple curiosity. For young people born during or immediately after the conflict, the 1940s appeared exotic, a slightly romantic time of belted trench coats, padded shoulders, and extravagant hats. Nearly half the population of Western Europe was now too young to possess personal memories of the war; for them the chief obstacle to knowledge was not fear of the truth but the reticence of their elders.

The result of these varied factors was a new predisposition to criticize the failings of "official history" and a spreading willingness to discuss

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once-taboo subjects in France, Germany, and Italy alike. In France, the movement received a name: *la mode rétro*, or "fashionable nostalgia." The 1970s was a decade when nostalgia indeed became fashionable in a more general sense; postcards from the turn of the century, posters from the 1920s, art deco jewelry became collectors' items. Yet the attention devoted to World War II and its Fascist pre-history eclipsed other aspects of *la mode rétro*. The emotions it tapped ran deeper; once liberated, they could not easily be checked.

One of the earliest and best-known examples of the renewed interest in the 1940s was the documentary film *The Sorrow and the Pity*, directed by Marcel Ophuls and first shown in 1971. Not only did it mark a return to cinematographic realism; it further challenged a central tenet of French official history by arguing that support for the Resistance was neither deep nor widespread during the war. Two brothers, interviewed by Ophuls at their farm near Clermont-Ferrand, revealed how their Resistance activities had led to denunciation by a neighbor and their subsequent arrest and detention. Other survivors painted a picture of wartime anti-Semitism, black-market profiteering, and admiration for the Nazis. The film also exposed France's self-inflicted amnesia through interview exchanges such as that between Ophuls and two former lycée teachers, who were asked whether any of their students or students' parents had been arrested or shot for opposing the Germans:

MONSIEUR DANTON: I don't remember.
OPHULS: You don't remember either?
MONSIEUR DIONNET: I don't remember either. I don't know of any specific instances of that happening.
OPHULS: But on the walls over there are some specific instances.
MONSIEUR DIONNET: Oh, but these [names] are from the First World War, aren't they?
OPHULS: From the Second World War too.
MONSIEUR DIONNET: Really?

The Sorrow and the Pity still appeared sufficiently threatening to the French authorities in 1971 that it was forbidden to air on French television—the medium for which it had originally been intended. Yet as the decade progressed, the themes explored in *The Sorrow and the Pity* recurred with increasing frequency in French novels, films, and journalism. Not since the late 1940s had so many artists felt moved to place the war at the center of their concerns. The international acclaim that greeted such films as Louis Malle's *Lacombe Lucien* (1974) and Joseph Losey's *Monsieur Klein* of the following year demonstrated the degree to which they touched even audiences who had not experienced the war directly, but who responded to the deeper issues of loyalty,

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courage, and the motives for ethical choice that each film explored. Malle and Losey both dealt with the problems of identity: the first by portraying a teenage Fascist who had first wished to join the Resistance and who falls in love with a Jewish girl; the second by showing a man uncertain about whether or not he is a Jew and who chooses in the end to join French Jews being deported to certain death.

The theme of uncertain identity—a theme that had an obvious relevance to Europeans' troubled thirty-year flight from the past—appeared most memorably in a novel that in 1978 won the prestigious French Prix Goncourt. Patrick Modiano's *La Rue des Boutiques Obscures* recounted the attempts of an amnesia victim (since trained as a private detective) to recover his memory by tracing the few remaining clues to his former life. Blending elements of the classic crime thriller with the historical novel, Modiano (who had written the screenplay for *Lacombe Lucien*) portrayed his hero's quest for an authentic past as threatening and dangerous, yet also liberating. The quest concludes with the discovery that the hero, a Jew, had lost his memory when trying to escape from occupied France in 1943. Here it was not guilt but the trauma of suffering that had barred access to the past. Yet by reliving the trauma inwardly, the hero at last regains his memory. His exercise in self-recovery, Modiano implied, could serve as an example to all.

Breaking the taboo of silence and criticizing the myths of official history were not activities confined solely to intellectuals intent on laying bare the sins of fascism. The new mood of openness toward the past legitimatized interest in the careers of former Nazis, Fascists, and collaborators; sympathy, even admiration, appeared in some quarters for those who had cast their lot with the extreme Right. The public appetite for World War II memorabilia spurred a brisk trade in Nazi insignia and full-color picture books narrating Rommel's desert war in North Africa or tank battles on the Russian steppes. Teenage boys, for whom the war appeared a fantasy world of heroism and glamorous machines, proved to be particularly avid consumers. But survivors of the war and the occupation also participated in the new license for nostalgia. Right-wing memoirs could now be published openly, with sales figures that ensured a profit; a posthumous two-volume edition of Lucien Rebatet's venomous recollections of the period 1935–45 appeared in 1976 with the provocative title *Memoirs of a Fascist*. One Paris newspaper baptized 1978 the "year of the collaborator," while in Germany warning voices could be heard opposing the *Hitlerwelle*, a wave of media coverage devoted to the details of the Führer's private life with the same voyeuristic attention accorded to the lives of movie stars.

There was considerable irony in the fact that the very observers who had earlier lamented the public's scant willingness to confront what it

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knew about World War II now decried an unseemly concern for this same topic. Was a glorification of Hitler's career worse than guilty silence? Some commentators felt so and argued for educational reform so that the war would elicit horror rather than fascination from teenage students. The German Left-Catholic *Frankfurter Hefte* concluded in early 1979 that the *Hitlerwelle* demonstrated the need for "students' capacities for criticism and action [to be] strengthened and encouraged." They could not be trusted to confront the past alone.

Yet such warnings came too late. Interest in the war had now escaped the control of those who sought to educate the nation and existed as a mass phenomenon open to potential exploitation by canny entrepreneurs or by an unrepentant Right. The temporal distance from which the war was now viewed, the presence of a new generation not itself directly involved with the war's origins, the dissolution of old fears and the return of hidden prejudices all combined to foster a receptivity to reliving the war that had not existed since 1945. There was, however, as yet no indication whether it would lead to self-pity, self-congratulation, or atonement.

It was in this atmosphere of labile curiosity that the American television film *Holocaust* was first shown to European audiences. Preceded by several weeks of press coverage and debates that sharply divided the intellectual community, the film appeared on German television in late January of 1979, on French television a month later, and in Italy in late May of the same year. Gerald Green's docudrama—a four-part series produced by NBC in the wake of the phenomenal success of *Roots*—had drawn mixed reviews in the United States. While Elie Wiesel attacked it as a "soap opera," other commentators praised its emotional force. Yet even the most sanguine European predictions fell far short of anticipating the film's astonishing success in stirring repressed memories and winning belated sympathy for the Jewish victims of the Third Reich.

One might have expected that the television audience, having satisfied its initial curiosity, would decline in numbers as the series progressed; in fact, night by night the audience grew. One might have imagined that those who were moved by the film would hide their feelings out of shame or embarrassment. Instead special phone lines provided by German television authorities were swamped with thousands of calls, and the mail room of the Westdeutscher Rundfunk was flooded with tens of thousands of letters. "The conspiracy of silence has been broken," one journalist noted with mingled surprise and relief. A French critic, comparing *Holocaust* with Alain Resnais's *Night and Fog*, concluded that Hollywood had outdone the latter in conveying the truth of the Jewish experience during the war, while in Italy the author Primo

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Levi, a survivor of Auschwitz, delared the film a "welcome ally" in the struggle to remember.

What explains the immense public outpouring of interest in *Holocaust*? As many commentators noted, its message was hardly novel. Hundreds of films dealing with the same topic had been televised over the preceding decade, with the same panoply of roundtable discussions and chilling statistics, but without the same success. What *Holocaust* did above all was to dramatize a single family of victims and involve viewers emotionally in their fate. The Weiss family of Berlin—an assimilated, upper-middle-class Jewish doctor, his wife, and three grown children—were the sort of warm and decent people one would want as neighbors. The decision to portray this milieu—rather than, for example, impoverished *Ostjuden* from the Pale of Settlement—served to offset whatever lingering anti-Semitism viewers still harbored. In dramatic contrast with the Weiss family and their ordeal were the rising fortunes of their neighbors, the Dorfs. Eric Dorf exemplified the ambitious, hardworking, loyal party member who casts his lot with the Nazis and prospers under the Third Reich. His initial motives and feelings could be shared by many Germans, and thus invited viewer empathy as well. In the end, Dorf participates in the genocide campaign against the Jews as an SS officer. When captured by the Americans in 1945, he commits suicide. Of the Weiss family, who are among his victims, only one son and his sister-in-law ultimately survive.

It seems possible to conclude that *Holocaust* owed its success not only to the way it simplified and personalized the past but also to the way it allowed the audience to evade the more difficult question of their own responsiblity for what occurred during the war. To the extent that one identified with the Weiss family, everyone became a Jew. Given many Europeans' strong sense of victimization—whether by the Fascists or by the Allies—*Holocaust* merely confirmed that they had become pawns in a time of war. Yet precisely because the film presented history in the guise of melodrama, it gave its viewers a reason to care about the past in a way they had not been able to care before. An American film based on wholly fictional characters appeared more real to many Europeans than the thousands of novels, memoirs, exhibitions, and films that preceded it because it remained within the limits of the viewers' ability to comprehend. Though reductive and manipulative, *Holocaust* nevertheless transformed the "total process" that Koestler had argued could never be known into "little lumps of reality."

Forty years after the end of World War II, the memory of the war is still undergoing transformation in Europe. That fact itself is a tribute to its staying power and unsettling presence. It is, of course, too soon to know where this third phase in European efforts to confront the war will

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ultimately lead. Yet it seems clear that the era of silence has ended and that the stock of conventional images of the past adopted by official history has been enriched in important ways. More significant, perhaps, is that this process of extending the range of memory has finally touched a broad public and is no longer confined to an academic or artistic elite. Despite the resurgence of right-wing apologists for Nazism, the continued marketing of Hitler memorabilia (including the forged diaries so incautiously acquired by *Stern* magazine), and public apathy concerning unpunished war criminals, the distance between myth and memory has been narrowed, though not overcome.

"A catastrophe triggers no moral change whatever in people," the disillusioned German journalist Wilhelm Hausenstein wrote in his diary shortly after Germany's unconditional surrender in May 1945. The sort of change that Hausenstein wished for has not occurred, but neither has the catastrophe been forgotten. If its survivors, despite their diminishing numbers, remember the war better today than they did forty years ago, this seeming paradox suggests that memory can be suppressed but not destroyed, banished yet then recalled. Over time, memory reasserts its claim to the truth of lived experience and sets limits to the pleasing fabrications proposed by myth. As Marx might have said: Men and women remake their own history, but not entirely as they choose.

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The Swallow Watcher

(for Larry and Elliot)

WENDY BARKER

Every house needs someone to watch the swallows,
someone willing
to half close the eyes, lean the head back
against a tall chair
in a garden, on a porch, in a courtyard.

It doesn't matter if a cheap paperback
falls wrinkled from the knees,
a wine glass dangles
empty from the hand.
What matters is the watching:
following

the lifts and darts
of the small birds,
the racings and screechings over territory,
the jags and dips for insects,
the gliding on wind.

About the time
the neighbor's porch light comes on
and the sky
can't hold color any more
the swallow watcher moves inside

to the glare of living room lights,
but he turns, leans
against the cool glass of the sliding door,
and stares out at the dark sifting down,
quiet as feathers, easy as wings.

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Cricket and Beyond

The Career of C. L. R. James

JERVIS ANDERSON

IN THE EARLY 1950s, when I began attending high school in Kingston, Jamaica, I lived for some time as a boarder in a private home. My own home was about eighty or ninety miles away, in one of the rural towns of the island, and it was the custom in Kingston for students and civil servants from the countryside to room and board with private families. The only other lodger at the home in which I stayed was a high-school teacher from Trinidad, named Mr. Roach. He had recently arrived in Jamaica and was rooming and boarding until he was able to find and establish a residence of his own. Mr. Roach, a short, black man, in his mid-forties, struck me as an irrepressible pedagogue and a garrulous raconteur. Whether at the dining table, in the drawing room, or on the front porch, he could seldom resist the impulse to educate the rest of us with his broad range of knowledge or to entertain us with reminiscences of life in his native Trinidad. He grinned joyfully at his own humor, even when the evidence (a circle of blank faces) showed that his listeners had failed to find an occasion for the slightest of smiles. If I was the one who laughed more often than the others, it wasn't because I found his jokes and stories to be as humorous as he did; it was because I liked his joyful and self-congratulatory grins, found them to be more amusing than his other attempts at levity. When others in the household, shying away from his speeches, were reluctant to join him on the front porch, I was almost always his captive or loyal audience. He frequently summoned me out to sit with him and, as he put it, profit from his instructions and narratives—summonses that I didn't think I should refuse, since, as he and I both recognized, he was old enough to be my father and learned enough to be my teacher. I also recognized that he and I were the only guests in the house, bound by our common status as strangers; and I feared that he might have considered me a traitor if, by remaining indoors, I appeared to be choosing the company of our hosts over his own.

Most of what profit I gained from listening to him on the front porch vanished instantly, in the time it took to enter one ear and leave the other. I was far too unread to appropriate the serious values of his

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discussions. About all that remained with me were some of the names—none of which I'd ever heard before—that figured in his discourses: Josephus, Voltaire, Bacon, Ruskin, Marie Corelli, Carlyle (and his *Sartor Resartus*); Joe Small, Wilton St. Hill, Clifford Roach, George John, and C. L. R. James.

All those after *Resartus* were names of Trinidadian cricketers Mr. Roach had seen and applauded as a younger man. Whenever he mentioned such names, his voice fairly thrilled with pride, as though the Trinidadian batsmen and bowlers of his younger years were about the best he ever hoped to see, anywhere. I wasn't at all surprised by the note of chauvinism I heard in his voice. It was a Trinidadian trait, to be sure; but it was a trait of almost all West Indians as well, especially when they were evaluating the cultural merits of their different home territories. Most West Indians (whether Trinidadians, Jamaicans, Guianese, or Barbadians) were in the habit of talking as though the cricketers from *their* individual homelands were about the best they ever hoped to see. Only the true royalty of batting and bowling, the exceptional players from the different territories—George Headley and Alfred Valentine (Jamaica); Learie Constantine, Jefferey Stollmeyer, and Sonny Ramadhin (Trinidad); Rohan Kanhai and Joe Solomon (Guiana); Frank Worrell, Everton Weekes, Clyde Walcott, Garfield Sobers (Barbados)—were exempt from purely insular celebrity, were accorded a consensus of West Indian praise and adulation.

Of the Trinidadian players Mr. Roach mentioned, C. L. R. James was (as I later learned) the least accomplished. He had been a reasonably good batsman and bowler but, unlike Joe Small and the others—who were gifted enough to have represented Trinidad in inter-island competition or to have been chosen as members of the all–West Indies team—James had never risen above the level of Saturday-afternoon club cricket. There were, apparently, other demands on his attention that made it difficult for him to devote himself entirely to the game. Yet Mr. Roach seemed to think more highly of James than of all the others. He spoke almost as reverentially about James as he did about Carlyle. Clearly, James was more than just a cricketer; clearly, he held a place of wider importance in Mr. Roach's mind and in the affairs of Trinidad. I was unable to grasp quite what that place of wider importance was, but I sensed that it was related to the sphere of intellectual activity. Mr. Roach eventually found a residence of his own, moved out of the guest house, and disappeared from my life.

It wasn't until the mid-1960s, when I was a graduate student at New York University, that I again heard the name of C. L. R. James. I was on my way home from class one afternoon—having just sat through a lecture by Sidney Hook on philosophy and history—when, walking across Wash-

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ington Square Park, I found myself sharing a path with the eminent professor himself. We fell into a conversation around some of the issues he had raised in class; and I was in the middle of one of my breathless remarks when Hook, with his characteristic abruptness, interrupted me with this question: "Do you know C. L. R. James?"

I was dumbfounded. What did James have to do with the subjects of our talk? Well, I surely didn't know James, but my ears pricked up at the sound of his name. Hook seemed to know James. If he didn't, then he appeared to know enough about James to have formed an estimate of his importance. I knew, from sitting in his classes, that he seldom wasted attention on anyone who failed to engage his nimble and eclectically furnished intellect. He was a professor of philosophy but—and this used to astonish me—he seemed equally at ease with social history, politics, Marxian dialectics, Freudianism, and world literature. Beyond all of that, his question also suggested that because I came from the West Indies there was a reasonable chance that I knew C. L. R. James.

"No," I replied, "I do not know Mr. James. We're from different islands. But I *am* acquainted with his name."

Hook's next question came with a daunting crispness: "Have you read his books?"

Books! Then James had written books! I was casting about for a face-saving answer when Hook pressed his devastating inquiry: "You *haven't* read *The Black Jacobins*?"

I now winced; for I interpreted the spirit of his question to be this: "You mean to say that you, a black West Indian student, haven't read *The Black Jacobins*?" In light of that interpretation, it was as though Hook had just found himself conversing with an English major who had never read Shakespeare, a left-wing intellectual who had never read Hegel or Marx or Trotsky, a history major who was ignorant of Spengler, a major-league baseball player who had never heard of Cobb, Hornsby, Ruth, Aaron, Mantle, or Mays.

I told him the truth, that I had never read *Jacobins*. I might have volunteered further damaging information—that I had never heard of the book, that I hadn't even realized that James was a writer—but I wasn't quite so shameless; there were decent limits to candor. I was also glad that he didn't ask what I surmised his next question would be: "Then how did you come to be acquainted with James's name?" What would an answer about cricket have meant to a mind like Sidney Hook's? In any case, his countenance, which tended to be skeptical and inclement in the clearest and brightest of weather, now turned decidedly sour. I took it to be a sign of the disappointing discovery he had just made—that of my ignorance. A veil of silence descended between us as we continued our walk, and I understood his side of the veil to mean that he had

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exhausted his interest in my company. I began looking for the first opportunity to relieve him of it; and the chance came when—having made our way across the park—we arrived at the intersection of McDougal Street and Waverly Place. Judging correctly that he would be heading west along Waverly, toward Sixth Avenue, I mumbled a hasty good-bye and turned north along McDougal, toward Eighth Street, on a route I hadn't intended to take.

My first purchase the following morning—it might have been the third, after the *Times* and a subway token from Brooklyn, where I lived—was a paperbound copy of *The Black Jacobins*. It was there staring at me from a shelf in the N.Y.U. bookstore. I discovered that this book, first published in 1938, was a history of Toussaint L'Ouverture's leadership of the successful slave revolt that established Haiti as the first black independent nation in the Western hemisphere. James explains, in the preface to his book:

> The revolt is the only successful slave revolt in history, and the odds it had to overcome is evidence of the magnitude of the interests that were involved. The transformation of slaves, trembling in hundreds before a single white man, into a people able to organize themselves and defeat the most powerful European nations of their day, is one of the great epics of revolutionary struggle and achievement.
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> By a phenomenon often observed, the individual leadership responsible for this unique achievement was almost entirely the work of a single man—Toussaint L'Ouverture. . . . He dominated from his entry until circumstances removed him from the scene. . . . Between 1789 and 1815, with the single exception of Bonaparte himself, no single figure appeared on the historical stage more greatly gifted than this Negro, a slave till he was 45.
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> The writing of history becomes ever more difficult. The power of God or the weakness of man, Christianity or the divine right of kings to govern wrong, can easily be made responsible for the downfall of states and the birth of new societies.

Jacobins was as engrossing a piece of history as I had ever read—a fine blend of the factual record, fearless historical judgment, vivid and eloquent prose.

I later bought another of James's books, *Mariners, Renegades and Castaways*. This work, a critical social study of Melville and his novels, revealed to me yet another side of James's abilities. I was surprised to find him writing as impressively on literary-social issues as he did on purely historical ones. And, as I gathered from a bibliography in *Mariners*, James had written other books as well. He had also written *The Life of Captain Cipriani* (a progressive Trinidadian politician); *Minty Alley*, a novel; *Toussaint L'Ouverture*, a play; *A History of the Negro Revolt; World Revolution: The Rise and Fall of the Communist*

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International; and *The Case for West Indian Self-Government.* Without reading those books, I could see now what was on Mr. Roach's mind when he had suggested that James's importance extended well beyond the field of cricket. I could see, too, why James had engaged the interest of a man like Sidney Hook. He was as significant a literary and political intellectual as any to have come out of the West Indies.

James was born in 1901, and his writings were done partly in Trinidad (where he lived until 1932), partly in England (to which he migrated from Trinidad), and partly in the United States (where he came on a visit in 1938 and remained until the early 1950s). He had embraced Marxism along the way, and by the late 1930s he had become a Trotskyist partisan of the Russian revolutionary disputes. In New York and in other parts of the United States he was deeply involved—by his writings, speeches, and his activities as a labor organizer—in all the factional fights and debates that raged around Marxist purism, Leninist heroism, Stalinist totalitarianism, and Trotskyist revisionism. When he returned to England from the United States, it was because he had been deported. In the eyes of the immigration authorities, his radical expressions and activities exceeded the freedoms to which an alien was entitled. It was while he was on Ellis Island, awaiting deportation, that he wrote his book on Melville, in which he said of *Moby-Dick:*

> Melville built his gigantic structure, a picture of world civilization, using one small vessel, with a crew of thirty-odd men, for the most part isolated from the rest of the world. Here was I, just about to write, suddenly projected onto an island isolated from the rest of society, where American administrators and officials, and American security officers controlled the destinies of perhaps a thousand men, sailors, "isolatoes," renegades and castaways from all parts of the world. It seems now as if destiny had taken a hand to give me a unique opportunity to test my ideas of this great American writer.

After I had discovered who, indeed, James was—beyond his connection to cricket in Trinidad—I closed the two of his books that I had read, recognized his place on the West Indian intellectual roll of honor, and went on with the business of my life. There was no pressing reason for me to go on thinking about him. The West Indians in New York who played cricket on Randall's Island, at Van Cortlandt Park (in the Bronx), or at Walker's Park (on Staten Island) had hardly any awareness of C. L. R. James. My graduate studies at N.Y.U. emphasized not philosophy and history but English and American literature. And, since James had returned to resettle in England, little or nothing had been heard of him in this country, even within the left-wing circles he had frequented while living in New York. The decades of his radical fashion had passed; and he may even, for all I knew, have retired from the arenas of political combat.

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If the latter was true—it seems to have been true while James remained in England—then he had returned his mind and his pen to one of the earliest arenas of his interest: that of the cricket field. He had not only played the game as a younger man in Trinidad, but he had been a cricket journalist there as well. And not long after he migrated to Britain, he had been hired by the Manchester *Guardian*—at the recommendation of Neville Cardus, the paper's music critic and senior cricket writer—to report and comment on English county cricket. Cardus's recommendation was a high compliment to the Trinidadian. Few among the English then believed that a colonial, let alone a black colonial, was as capable as Englishmen were of writing about their national game, a game that they had invented. Moreover, the *Guardian*'s cricket commentary, most of it authored by Cardus himself, the nonpareil of cricket writers, was widely regarded as the best in England. Perhaps the only two serious contenders for Cardus's throne were E. W. Swanton of the *Daily Telegraph* and John Arlott of the BBC. Here is Cardus on Denis Compton, one of the great English batsmen of the postwar era: "masterly without pomposity, sometimes without maturity, constantly renewing himself, so that he could, at one and the same time, show us batsmanship of rare technical range, rendered almost boyish by impulse. In the mastery of [Jack] Hobbs [an English batsman of an earlier era], something of an autumnal brown appeared; in the mastery of Compton, the green leaf wonderfully revealed itself again and again." And here is Cardus on Ted Dexter (another Englishman who was younger even than Compton): "In our modern times we have seen only one cricketer faintly reminiscent of [A. C.] MacLaren [like Hobbs, a magisterial batsman of the Georgian era] and he was Ted Dexter. But Dexter, a product of a period shorn of aristocratic *panache*, was, compared to MacLaren in demeanour and cricket breeding, a sort of gentleman's gentleman. His show of command and hauteur seemed to be obtained second-hand. . . . He could be brilliant and admirable for a period, but not often over a long innings. Blue blood, yes; also *bar sinister*." Among baseball writers, perhaps only Roger Angell may be seen as an approximation of Cardus.

At any rate, having returned to England from the United States, James resumed his earlier passion for cricket and cricket writing. In due course, he undertook his magnum opus on the national pastime of the English and their colonial subjects, a work aimed at recording and summing up his long association with cricket and his abiding love for the game.

The result is *Beyond a Boundary*, perhaps the most socially and culturally conscious of all the books that have been written on cricket. It was published in England more than twenty years ago and has only

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recently appeared under an American imprint (published by Pantheon, $16.95 hardcover, $8.95 paperback). It is surprising enough that its release in the United States comes so many years after its publication in England; it is even more surprising that it has appeared over here at all. How many readers can there be in this country for a book on cricket? Still, for such readers, there may be some reward in what James has in mind when he titles his book *Beyond a Boundary*. It is about cricket and more. It is as much about the techniques of cricket as it is about the sociology and psychology of the game. It is about the role that cricket played in the formation of James's character and outlook; about cricket as a medium of entertainment and aesthetic expression; about cricket as a reflection of English manners and temperament and as a model for personal and public ethics. Who could have dreamed when cricket began to be played, in the early eighteenth century, as a pastime for the working classes—before it was taken up and taken over by the middle and patrician classes—that the game would come to embody the highest standards of English ethical conduct? As James asks, in explaining the wide focus of his book, "What do they know of cricket who only cricket know?"

But if the question is applicable to millions of those who were born and raised around cricket yet have failed to grasp its broader social and cultural significance, then how much more applicable must it be to Americans? Not knowing cricket at all, how can they begin to imagine what else the game may be about? James will be helpful in explaining some of the personal and public values that lie behind the game; but not even he, I suspect, is capable of making the game itself—the techniques of this leisurely and phlegmatic English institution—intelligible to an American audience. Its practical techniques and the reticences of its inner life—its aesthetics and tactics—can only be dull and elusive to an audience reared on the swifter and more declarative energies of baseball.

Let me try to show why. There are nine innings in a baseball game; there are seldom more than two in a cricket match. There are at least four umpires in baseball; only two in cricket. One pitcher may represent his team through all nine innings in baseball, unless or until he's knocked out of the box; in cricket, from four to six bowlers may work for their team during an innings—and any one of them may be brought back at a later stage, even if he had previously been "knocked out of the box" (there is, of course, no such expression in cricket). The strategies and tactics of a baseball team are usually directed by a nonplaying manager, in the dugout; in cricket they are directed by the captain, on the field. In baseball, one hitter at a time comes to the plate; in cricket there are always two men at bat—one at each end of the wicket or the batting

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pitch. When the one taking strike hits the ball beyond the reach of a fieldsman, he exchanges ends with the other, who then takes strike. One run is scored when they exchange ends—or two or three, as often as they are able to exchange ends before the ball is returned from the outfield. When a batsman hits the ball with sufficient force so that it crosses a far boundary of the field, he is automatically credited with four runs. When he lofts it in a long and high trajectory so that it lands over a far boundary, the equivalent of a homer in baseball, he is credited with six runs. Two men in cricket may bat for as long as it takes the bowlers to get one of them out. He is then replaced by another member of his eleven-man team; this may continue until the entire team is bowled out—by which time (say, in a five-day Test match between two countries) from three hundred to six hundred runs may be scored. (Yes, a cricket match may last for as many as five days, whereas a baseball game seldom lasts beyond three hours.) A batsman may be bowled out when, in attempting a stroke, he misses the ball, which then hits any of the three stumps standing behind him; he may be caught when he lofts or pops up a ball in the outfield or infield; or (and these are difficult to explain) the umpire may rule that he has been *stumped out, run out,* or trapped *leg-before-the-wicket.* It is not customary in cricket, unlike baseball, for a batsman to argue over an umpiring decision, however incorrect or outrageous that decision may be. When one team of eleven is retired (or the captain, feeling that a safe number of runs has been scored, foreshortens an innings by "declaring" it closed), the opposing team starts coming to bat. It wins or loses, depending on whether or not it is able to exceed the hundreds of runs to which it is asked to reply, or it earns a draw if, on the last day of the match, it has neither been bowled out nor has scored the number of runs required to win.

I would fault no American reader of this report for finding all or most of the foregoing passage to be both tedious and arcane; the fault lies either with the foreign complexities of cricket or with the inability of this writer to make them intelligible. Only people with cricket in their bones can ever hope to make sense of how that game is played. Nor, at this point, should an American reader be surprised if I acknowledge the difficulty of explaining such bowling terms as an *over* and a *maiden over,* the *leg-break* and the *offbreak,* the *googly* and the *beamer,* the *in-swinger* and the *outswinger;* such terms for field placements as *mid on* and *mid off, silly mid on* and *silly mid off, long on* and *long off, square leg* and *short leg, fine leg* and *long leg, forward short leg* and *backward short leg, cover* and *cover point, extra cover* and *short extra cover, first slip* and *second slip* and *third man;* or such batting terms as the *forward defensive* and *backward defensive,* the *back drive* and the *forward drive* and the *cover drive,* the *on drive* and the *off drive,* the *square cut* and the

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late cut, the *pull* and the *hook* and the *leg glance*.

I will venture, however, to say something about the pitch or the wicket—the 22-yard-long strip of rolled turf or clay, at the center of the cricket field, on which the batsmen stand when facing the bowling, from one end or the other. The aesthetics of batting—the ease or difficulty of it—have a good deal to do with the state of the wicket or the pitch. Let's call it the wicket. When it is dry and well rolled, with a firm and hard surface, it is more helpful to batting than to bowling. Fast balls (or fast bowling) tend to bounce or rear up off it at the batsman without many surprises of pace, height, or direction. Such a wicket, with little or no moisture in it, is usually called a lifeless wicket, an easy wicket, or a batsman's paradise. It is an even greater paradise when the slow bowlers (the leg-break, off break, or googly bowlers) are at work. Their soft deliveries, trickily tossed and spun, are designed to deceive and befuddle the batsman, by breaking or turning away from the batsman, in one unpredictable direction or another. But when they are unable to find any traction for their spin—on a hard and firm wicket—they fail to achieve their guile and are thus at the mercy of an aggressive batsman. It is only when the wicket has lost its firmness, when it has been made brittle or soft by a shower of rain, that bowlers gain the advantage and batsmen find themselves struggling to keep their innings alive. It has now become what is called a sticky wicket. The bowled balls, viciously spun, now bite into the softened or crumbling pitch, and break or hop with unpredictable sharpness and suddenness. The most heroic innings in cricket—demanding the utmost of carefulness, judgment, vigilance, skill, and tenacity—are the innings that are played on a crumbling or sticky wicket. The mastery of, or the survival on, a sticky wicket is one of the major moral metaphors of cricket—a sign, especially to the English, of how personal character responds to plight and predicament.

Here, since we have ventured this far, is a bit more about the game that an American audience might find difficult to understand. Why is it so devastating to the morale of the British people—why are they plunged into a state of virtual mourning—when their national cricket team is defeated by the Australians? It is because England has failed to regain or retain the "Ashes." In the late nineteenth century, Australia gained its first victory over England on English soil. Englishmen behaved as though their defeat on the cricket field were as humiliating as a defeat in military combat. The morning after the debacle, a London newspaper printed this obituary (or words to the same effect): "English cricket died at Lord's yesterday. The remains have been cremated, and the ashes will be taken to Australia." Ever since then, the battles between England and Australia have been battles to regain or retain the "Ashes."

If Americans don't lose all interest after the first day of a five-day

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cricket match, they might witness, on the last day, one team—especially a team of Englishmen—batting defensively and doggedly, displaying no interest in scoring runs. That gritty but dull spectacle, in which the batting team stonewalls long enough to keep the other team from winning, is called playing for a draw. To Englishmen, the earning of a draw, the successful struggle to stave off defeat, can be an achievement of epic proportions—a moral victory, almost as honorable an outcome as victory itself. But what, to Americans, could be inspiring about such a spectacle? American sport does not, as a rule, recognize or applaud moral victories or honorable draws. There are surely no such things in baseball, where the contest must always be resolved, however many extra innings might be required to break a tie. The typical dramas of American sport demand decisive outcomes, clear winning and losing, not the genteel heroism of English stalemates. Who can be surprised if Americans are bored and baffled by the idea, or the style, of cricket—cricket with its strange terms and techniques, its elusive aesthetics of batting and bowling, its mysterious strategies and tactics, its patrician manners, its snail's pace, its quiet dramas and self-effacing conflicts.

And yet there remains something in James's *Beyond a Boundary,* in what he means by that title, that might engage even those who neither cricket know nor for cricket care. Beyond the purely technical affairs of the game, James presents fragments of autobiography; describes the personalities and accomplishments of great batsmen and bowlers; makes a case for cricket (unsuccessfully, I think) as a branch of the dramatic arts; acknowledges the influence of cricket on the shaping of his personal values; and points to the role the game has played in helping (unintentionally) to advance social and racial aspirations in the former British West Indian colonies. To indicate the essence of what lies in the *Beyond* of James's title, I shall need to refer only to the game's influence on the author's upbringing and on certain areas of public life in the West Indies.

James was born and raised next door to a cricket field in Tunapuna, Trinidad, and learned to play the game at an early age. His father, a stern schoolmaster and a lover of cricket, a bookman and a sportsman, introduced him to serious texts and presented him with his first bat before he reached the age of ten. As the younger James grew up, the life of reading and the life of cricket vied steadily for his affections. On Saturday afternoons, when he sat on his windowsill looking out at matches being played on the cricket ground, he could "stretch a groping hand" toward a set of books on the top of a piece of furniture nearby. Between books and cricket "the early pattern of my life was set." At Queen's Royal College, one of the superior high schools in Trinidad, he fell even more deeply in love with cricket and was a good enough player

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to be selected for the school's first eleven. When his growing attachment to the game threatened for a while to distract his attention from books, his father sought, without success, to curtail his activities on the cricket field. James "just went and played and said to hell with the consequences." There were then "two people" living in him: one, "the rebel against all family and school discipline"; the other, "a Puritan who would have cut off a finger sooner than do anything contrary to the ethics of the game." One of the many ethics of the game demanded faithfulness to one's friends and comrades on the cricket field.

There was, of course, yet another force living in James. That, despite the distractions of cricket, was his continuing love for books—the classics of Greece and Rome; the poetry of Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Keats, and Shelley; the essays of Hazlitt and Lamb; the novels of Fielding, Eliot, Dickens, Trollope, and Thackeray. No novel so obsessed him as did *Vanity Fair*. "My mother had an old copy with a red cover," he recalls. "I had read it when I was about eight, and of all the books that passed through that house this one became my Homer and my bible. I read it through from the first page to the last, then started again, read to the end and started again. Whenever I finished a new book I turned to my *Vanity Fair*. . . . It was a refuge into which I withdrew. By the time I was fourteen I must have read the book over twenty times and I used to confound the boys at school by telling them to open it anywhere, read a few words, and I would finish the passage, if not in the exact words, at least close enough."

What could have drawn him so strongly and so steadily to *Vanity Fair*? What lessons could there have been in such a book for a boy who grew up to become a radical historian, a Marxian intellectual, and a devotee of cricket and its social values? "I don't know," James writes. But—particularly about the book's influence on James's attachment to cricket—we think we know. He drops some helpful clues in *Beyond a Boundary*, and here is one: "But the things [in Thackeray] I did not notice and took for granted were more enduring: the British reticence, the British self-discipline, the stiff lips, upper and lower." All those qualities, he goes on to say, were examples of the "solid British middle class, Puritanism incarnate." And, as it happens, all those qualities were central to the code of personal behavior that cricket exemplified. "Puritanism incarnate," they all represented the reinforcement that Thackeray brought to the developing social style and feeling of a young Trinidadian who regarded himself as "a Puritan who would have cut off a finger sooner than do anything contrary" to the ethics of cricket. As James states, dropping another clue, "Thackeray, not Marx, bears the heaviest responsibility for me." Cricket may be said to have borne a heavier responsibility for James than did radical political ideas.

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Here are some of the ethics of cricket that his reading of *Vanity Fair* underscored: do not play for personal ambitions but for the team's; keep your head when the fortunes of a game have swung against your team; do not criticize teammates for failures, and do not withhold praise from opponents who are succeeding; uphold all the standards of fair play. It's "not cricket" to violate those rules of conduct. These stern principles of sportsmanship and gentlemanship were also drilled into James at Queen's Royal College by graduates of Oxford and Cambridge, Englishmen who had been raised to honor the public-school code of behavior with which the upper classes had invested the game of cricket. It is worth re-emphasizing that James learned those principles well: "I acquired the discipline, for which the only name is Puritan. I never cheated, I never argued with the umpire, I never jeered at a defeated opponent, I never gave a friend a vote or a place which . . . could be seen as belonging to a stranger. My defeats and disappointments I took as stoically as I could. If I caught myself complaining or making excuses I pulled up. If afterwards I remembered doing it I took an inward decision to try not to do it again. From the eight years of school life [at Q.R.C.] this code became the moral framework of my existence. It has never left me."

In light of all that, we may plausibly conclude that cricket, which the English colonial rulers took with them to the West Indies, was more than just an entertaining pastime. It also served as one of the agencies through which they fostered the influence of their manners and ethics or established their moral authority—a means by which they captivated sections of the populations they had captured. James suggests how well those ends were pursued: terms like "a straight bat" and "it isn't cricket" were "the watchwords of manners and virtue and the guardian of freedom and power." Manners and virtue were clearly what the English rulers said they were; and the freedom and power that the watchwords were meant to safeguard were chiefly those of the dominant classes.

But not all elements within the captured populations were wholly captivated by the ethics of cricket. Many among the masses, guided by the facts of their social experience, remained skeptical. Some enjoyed playing cricket; others, who were not players, loved watching the game. But when they left the cricket ground, they left its ethics there as well. They couldn't see themselves embracing such ethics as rules of their everyday conduct, for they couldn't recognize much evidence of fair play in the social conditions that the governing classes—the teachers and missionaries of cricket morality—had imposed on them. They knew, for example, that a rule of cricket conduct required losers to be good and graceful losers. But how were they to submit themselves to the principle of good and graceful losing when, within the social and political circumstances of their society, they were virtually condemned to a life of

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losing? Hence, as James tells us, the West Indian masses "did not care a damn" about the cricket code. They "knew the code as it applied to sport" but "they expected us, the educated, the college boys, to maintain it."

Maintain it they did. It was chiefly the educated middle classes, many of their members springing from the masses, who were captivated by the cricket code, who incorporated it into various modes of their social conduct. According to James, "There is a whole generation of us, perhaps two generations, who have been formed by [the code] not only in social attitudes but in our most intimate personal lives." It was that code that helped to produce in James the strange amalgam of gentleman and political radical—a phenomenon that English society seems to breed more easily than does any other. That fact may account in part for James's great admiration for William Hazlitt: "an intellectual to his fingertips, and a militant, an extreme democrat who suffered martyrdom for his opinions. . . . He takes his whole self wherever he goes. . . . Hazlitt's strength and comprehensiveness were the final culmination of one age fertilized by the new. . . . This was the age that among its other creations produced the game of cricket." It may also help to explain James's admiration for Michael Foot of the British Labor Party, a gentleman and left-wing intellectual who is himself one of the warmest surviving admirers of Hazlitt.

James, the educated gentleman-radical, came eventually to recognize that while he and others like him had been wholly converted to the teachings of the cricket code, the governing classes, in their dealings with the masses, kept faith with neither the letter nor the spirit of the code they preached. That is, while those who enjoyed freedom and power were being well safeguarded by the watchwords of manners and virtue, they were acting neither mannerly nor virtuously toward those who had little freedom and less power. And one of the conspicuous arenas in which the privileged were flouting their own precepts of honor and fair play was the cricket field, on which those very precepts had been refined.

Especially during the colonial era, the privileged classes in the West Indies were not only the British rulers and settlers but also an upper stratum of local whites and mulattoes. The interests and prejudices of the latter were virtually identical with those of the British. "No imperialist expatriates can rule an alien population alone," James writes. "The British therefore incorporated the local whites into their ranks. Later, as the pressure from the people grew, the light-skinned were given privileges." Those privileges were as evident in the social and political life of the West Indian colonies as they were on the more important cricket fields of the region.

Although most players on the teams that represented the different

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Caribbean territories were black—as were those on the combined team that represented the West Indies at home and abroad—none had ever been considered for the position of captaincy. Traditionally, the captains of all such teams were either white or light-skinned, even when, as was often the case, their abilities were inferior to those of the black players they were appointed to lead. Skin color and a relationship to the dominant classes were the only determinants of West Indian cricket captaincy. Whatever else that policy affirmed, it bore no resemblance to the game's ethic of "the straight bat." It was in violation of one of the principal values on which the morality of cricket was founded. It surely wasn't cricket.

It isn't surprising, then, that by the late 1950s, when various mass movements for self-determination had arisen in the British Caribbean, the issue of West Indian cricket captaincy was joined to all the other social and nationalist issues that had brought those movements into being. At Test matches—between the West Indies and visiting teams from England, Australia, or India—the masses began hurling stones and bottles onto the cricket field. They could no longer endure the policy that mandated a white captaincy for a predominantly black team, surely not when some of the most popular and qualified players of their own color were being rejected by that policy. Even Keith Miller, a visiting Australian player, had been moved to observe on the long-festering problem in West Indies cricket: "The captain has usually been chosen from among the European stock. Just think of the famous West Indies cricketers . . . Learie Constantine, George Headley, Frank Worrell, Everton Weekes, Clyde Walcott . . . all are colored, but none has led his country."

That was the continuing state of affairs in 1958, when C. L. R. James returned from England for an indefinite stay in his homeland. After witnessing an incident of stone- and bottle-throwing at Queen's Park Oval (the shrine of cricket in Trinidad), he came to this conclusion: "It is the constant, vigilant, bold and shameless manipulation of players to exclude black captains that has so demoralized West Indian teams and exasperated the people—a people . . . in the full tide of the transition from colonialism to independence. . . . The discrimination against black men was now an international scandal." He further concluded: "The more brilliantly the black men played, the more it would emphasize to millions of English people: 'Yes, they are fine players, but, funny, isn't it, they cannot be responsible for themselves—they must always have a white man to lead them.' "

It was on a political assignment that James had come home to Trinidad. The Caribbean movements for independence had gained considerable inspiration from James's *The Case for West Indian Self-*

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Government, which was then one of the leading works in the politics of anti-colonialism; and Dr. Eric Williams, leader of Trinidad's People's National Movement, had invited James to return and assume the editorship of the PNM's weekly organ the *Nation*. But, product that he was of puritan ethics, James could scarcely remain indifferent to the grievances that the continued violation of those ethics had aroused in the cricket-loving masses. As editor, he could not help uniting those grievances with the political concerns of the *Nation*. What had led to the outbreak of stone- and bottle-throwing he witnessed at Queen's Park Oval was the selection of yet another light-skinned player—likable but of modest abilities—as leader of the West Indies team. This was viewed as a further insult not only to the predominantly black cricketing public but also to Frank Worrell, who was then—as he had been for some time—the most qualified candidate for the position of captaincy. He was a cultivated gentleman; a product of Combermere, Barbados's finest public school; a graduate of Manchester University; the leading batsman in the West Indies; and ranked among the top four or five batsmen in the world. While these credentials argued strongly in his favor, they were all overruled by the fact of his color.

James was as exasperated by this miscarriage of justice as the cricketing masses were. And, deciding "to clean up this captaincy mess once and for all," he used the weekly columns of the *Nation* "to wage an all-out campaign" in behalf of Worrell's claims to leadership of the West Indies team. As he argued, there "was not the slightest shadow of justification" for a cricketer of Worrell's distinction to play under a white captain of inferior abilities and achievements. After several weeks of relentless advocacy, James won his campaign. The white-only policy was rescinded, and Worrell was appointed the first black captain in the history of West Indies representative cricket.

It was fitting that such a campaign should have been led and won by the author of *The Case for West Indian Self-Government*. Perhaps it was even more fitting that it should have been fought by a man whose standards of moral conduct had been formed by the puritan ethics of cricket, a game he revered above all others. He writes of his triumphant campaign: "When I confessed I was angry, even sympathizers balked at this. According to the code, anger should not intrude in cricket. I understood them well, I had been as foolish in my time. According to the colonial version of the code, you were to show yourself a 'true sport' by not making a fuss about the most barefaced discrimination because it wasn't cricket. Not me, not any longer. To that I had said, was saying, my final goodbye."

James is right, indeed: What do they know of cricket who only cricket know?

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Reminded of Bougainville

(for Howard Erskine-Hill)

Donald Davie

"The rest is not our business." Come the end or
a good deal sooner rest is
our only business. Up to
and battering that
a swarming
intelligence names the names, the
localities. Who is to say when
shearing the boom and in a way we
least expected HMS *Coventry* shall
recuperate the Malvinas,
les Malouines, into renewed
restiveness and the wasps
of doubt, of self-doubt, of
resolution, of
intelligences swarm?

"a culture of regressive repetitions . . ."
Brave men and a gallant ship, her
namesake also sank
in World War Two
by bomber aircraft.
Carried aboard were
large mediaeval nails
from the bombed cathedral, formed in
the shape of a cross. She entered

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the 1st of May the total exclusion zone;
3rd of May her Lynx
helicopter scored
direct hits, totally
with its Sea Skua missiles
destroyed one target.

Sheffield was sunk the 4th of May;
Glasgow out of action
by the 11th. In the last
week of *Coventry*'s life, the
24th was a good day: three
aircraft down, and later another six.
The 25th, with *Broadsword*, in exposed
water, shortly after
six in the evening "sprang
very brave and determined
at us from behind
the land" four aircraft, one
persistingly with four
bombs, three in the portside,
exploded. Immediate flooding
and fire, very thick black
suffocating smoke. "Get the ship . . ."
"Aye aye sir," though
no power, the ship on fire
listing to port some fifty degrees, in fifteen
minutes on her side, in thirty

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her keel horizontal a few
feet above sea level. Later
she sank. Many brave deeds . . .

"In the Cathedral Three Great Nails once held
Hearts of Oak until in war they were felled."
Nineteen dead.

The verse-line is commodious, has to be.
A sea-borne landing launched without
command of the air, a foredoomed operation
or not, as now appears. What is the role
of the term "professional" in the expression:
"professional and brave men"? When did we last
hear: "the profession of arms"? A stout, outmoded
or not, it appears, conception. Bloody business
is some men's business decently, as when
Bougainville made the Falklands briefly French
so now, and we may rest in that. It is
always our business, always.

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Visits to a Morgue

HEINZ R. KUEHN

The history of literature is the great morgue where everyone seeks out his dead whom he loves or to whom he is related.
—Heinrich Heine, *The Romantic School*

In THE SPRING OF 1971 I returned to Germany for the first time since I had left it twenty years earlier to immigrate to America. While visiting a friend in Berlin, I scanned the titles in his library and came across an edition of the works of Theodor Haecker. Haecker, a contemporary of my father's generation, was a German Protestant philosopher, poet, and publicist who translated and wrote about Cardinal Newman, Kierkegaard, Vergil, Hilaire Belloc, and Francis Thompson, and whose conversion to Catholicism had decisively influenced Father's own conversion. I was in my teens when I first read him, but I still remember the power, lucidity, and poetic fervor of his language. "What does one think of Haecker nowadays?" I asked my friend. "Nobody reads him," he replied laconically.

I don't know if Haecker would deserve resurrection; I have not read him in some forty years, and I don't think I will ever read him again. But since that visit to Germany, I have become increasingly preoccupied with the literature of the country to which I had paid scant attention in two decades of separation, and particularly with the writers who had influenced me in my youth and helped to form my literary taste and judgment. The apartment in Berlin where I grew up had been full of books, books that were the literary staple of my parents and that I had preferred to any other entertainment or company. But which among them would still be read in Germany today? Heinrich Mann, for example, whom Father thought to be a much more interesting, more profound, and sharper mind than his brother, Thomas? Heinrich Mann, Father used to say, is eloquent, passionate, and engaged. He is a rebel and a visionary who can move his readers from thought to action. Thomas (again, according to Father) does not care about the struggles of man the social animal; his preoccupation is with man the psyche. Father called him detached, cold, analytical, a master at dissecting souls and

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composing artful sentences. Thomas became a minor classic, but who remembers Heinrich?

If "Heinrich versus Thomas" had not been one of Father's hobby-horses, I would have as much difficulty remembering Heinrich Mann—whose books I read when I was about ten years old—as I have remembering the books that were my daily companions from the time I knew how to hold a printed piece right-side up. Most of these writers can be found in any history of German literature textbook, but when I try to evoke names of authors or titles of books, the excursion into the past becomes a confusing and painful exercise. It is as if all the corpses in the morgue rise and begin to speak at once. I hear lines and whole passages but don't know who is speaking; I recognize names and faces but can't understand what they are saying. I know that at one time or another some of these men and women had been my friends; others had been companions who had entertained me; some had distorted my view of "life" for decades; others I had immediately recognized as adversaries. But why? When and where? In what manner?

I had to learn a new language, take possession of a whole new literary heritage, when I was thirty-two. Did this confuse, bury, or extinguish much of my memory of the heritage with which I had grown up? More likely, so many of the writers popular in my parents' time never took roots in me because they were part of the loneliness of my childhood. Books should be read in solitude, but a book, I have found, rarely becomes an experience if one can't discuss it with someone else. Of course, some of the books I read as a child etched the tabula rasa of my mind with indelible images: the fairy tales of the Brothers Grimm and of Hans Christian Andersen; the Wild West stories of Karl May, the German writer who had never set foot on American soil but whose immensely popular books profoundly influenced my and my generation's view of America; the adventures of Robinson Crusoe and the heartache of *Uncle Tom's Cabin;* the pranks of Max and Moritz, and the legends of the Nibelungen and of other heroes of the age of chivalry and romance. Those were the children's books of my time. But most of what I read was beyond my grasp and should have remained locked up behind the stained-glass doors of the case where Mother kept the books that had once been my parents' library, and that now, after their divorce, belonged to her.

I read without direction, often without understanding, overwhelmed and blinded by writers too powerful for a tender and still unformed mind. I read in solitude, too much too early, and there was nobody with whom I could talk about the images, the feelings, the desires and dreams that obsessed me. These books filled the void of Sunday afternoons, kept the threatening silence of interminable evenings at bay, helped me to

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deal with the problem of time. Alone in the apartment, with Mother and Sister occupied elsewhere, I would lie flat on my stomach, next to the case, elbows propped up, chin resting in hands, engrossed in the book that lay before me on the rug. When I evoke that picture, I begin to hear the voices in the morgue more distinctly, and I hear names that sound like a litany of saints whom the Church lists no longer in her liturgical calendar: Stefan Zweig, Ricarda Huch, Selma Lagerlöf, Jakob Schaffner, Hans Carossa, Christian Morgenstern, Hans Fallada, Eugen Roth, Detlev von Liliencron, Arthur Schnitzler, Jakob Wassermann, and Reinhard Johannes Sorge. And the litany continues. *Orate pro nobis. Orate pro me.* You don't represent the one and only redeeming faith, but you introduced me to my parents' inner world long before they themselves revealed it to me. Early in my life you gave me something that helped to make me who I became—or, who knows, something that kept me from becoming who I should have been. The history of literature has labeled you—symbolist, realist, naturalist, existentialist, romanticist—but that means nothing to me. What matters is that, fifty years ago, you were often more important to me than Father, Mother, Sister, or friends. Perhaps you are still being read today, even outside an obligatory curriculum of German literature. I wouldn't know. I have been away from Germany for thirty years, and I don't know if you are still alive among my contemporaries or, even less likely, among the generation of my children. It is unlikely, too, that I will ever read you again, unless by happenstance. My time is measured, and you are not among those whom I feel compelled to read before I myself join the forgotten authors. *Orate pro me.*

What I read unaided, purposelessly, and too soon, I remember only dimly or have forgotten, no matter what lasting effect these books may have had on me. But when I entered the gymnasium at age twelve, the bookcase in the apartment lost much of its attraction, and I began to acquire the literary taste and judgment that would henceforth guide my reading habits. In that section of the morgue, the voices are distinct and the faces recognizable. German took the greater part in the humanistic branch of higher education I had chosen, and for nine years I was drilled in a thorough knowledge of the giants of the German language. The demands of a German gymnasium were high: in each of the four I attended between 1930 and 1938, classes began at eight in the morning and ended at two in the afternoon, except on Saturdays when school let out at one o'clock. The afternoons, much of most evenings, and frequently a part of Sunday were taken up by homework. I learned quickly, remembered easily, and preferred German to any other subject, but even I found it difficult to keep up with the pace. We read and discussed the German classics, wrote lengthy compositions about them, and, most

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importantly, learned by heart many of the best, or most famous, things in them. More than forty years after I was graduated, I still know by heart numerous passages from Goethe's *Faust*, and from his other works, whether in prose or rhyme. I still have the same recall—which may not be instant anymore, but quick enough given a bit of thought or, even better, a glass or two of good wine—of many of the poems, songs, and lines of plays by such favorites of mine as Schiller, Uhland, Klopstock, Kleist, Eichendorff, and Heine. This heritage—taught persuasively if sometimes pedantically by teachers who knew their stuff, believed in what they taught, and loved it—has endured and retained its vigor and perennial freshness under the vicissitudes of my life.

Perhaps this is the secret of not only why I remember the classics of German literature, but why so much of what they wrote still sustains me, often at moments when I least expect their intrusion into my thoughts and feelings. My teachers themselves lived out of that immense and immensely rich treasury of the German language, and today I know that they wanted to transmit to us not merely knowledge, an obligatory curriculum, but survival rations for the road ahead. And perhaps more: they wanted to transmit to us a vision of Germany and of things German that was in desperate peril. The last six of the nine years during which I attended the gymnasium fell in the time of the Nazi regime. Whatever was being taught, and particularly German literature and history, was now supposed to be taught selectively and with a radically shifted emphasis to suit the Nazi ideology. As a half-Jew, I was perhaps more sensitive to the outrages of that ideology than most of my classmates, but I recall nothing from all my years at the gymnasium that smacked of the propaganda put out by the Ministry of Education. We were taught literature, not the social merits or abuses of literature. For my teachers—gray-haired *Studienräte* (professors) most of them, who had survived the First World War and made their careers under the Weimar Republic—language masterfully used by genius was intrinsically beautiful and valuable. Whether a poem, a novel, a drama confirmed or denied, supported or attacked an ideology, a belief, or a conviction was the listener's or reader's task to decide—not the teacher's or, least of all, the state's. I suspect my teachers became all the more scrupulously objective the greater the restraints that were forced on them by the state-approved curriculum. Were they hiding their abiding distaste for the regime behind the mask of an impeccable objectivity? "This poem reflects the sentiments of the Romantic School"; "This drama is in the vein of the New Naturalism"; "Here we have one of the finest examples of an existentialist novel"—our teachers should have told us that romanticism was highly suspect, that individualism and existentialism were incompatible with the new consciousness of *Volk*, of nationhood,

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of blood and soil, and of a German destiny. They never did. They would have choked on the very words.

One of the few books that have survived the destruction of my own library during the war and now stand on my shelves is Paul Fechter's *History of German Literature.* Fechter was one of the most renowned literary critics of my parents' generation. He became a Nazi sympathizer, and in the 1940 edition of his *History,* he revised his views on German literature to accommodate the Nazi doctrines. In that edition he devotes two chapters—"The Great Turning Point" and "The New Age"—to the writers in whom, according to the regime, German literature had attained its zenith. He reviews at length some thirty of these men and women. All of them wrote at the time I went to school, but I had never heard of their existence.

What did teach us the spirit of the new age was something else: the sharply, painfully felt contrast between the world of great German literature and the vulgarity of the new German reality. We would be sitting in class, for example, the windows open to a blue sky and the fresh green of spring, listening to the teacher's or a classmate's recital of a poem. It could have been any poem by any of the classics. Perhaps it was one of Friedrich Hölderlin's, perhaps his "Crowd Applause":

> Ist nicht heilig mein Herz, schöneren Lebens voll,
> Seit ich liebe? warum achtetet ihr mich mehr,
> Da ich stolzer und wilder,
> Wortreicher and leerer war?
>
> Ach, der Menge gefällt, was auf den Marktplatz taugt,
> Und es ehrt der Knecht nur den Gewaltsamen;
> An das Göttliche glauben
> Die allein, die es selbst sind.
>
> My heart, is it not holy, full of life still more beautiful
> Now that I love? Why did you pay me greater respect
> When I was prouder and wilder,
> More loquacious and emptier?
>
> Alas! it pleases the crowd what is fit for the marketplace,
> And the serf honors only him who is brutal;
> Those only believe in the divine
> Who are divine themselves.

And while we listened, attentive, perhaps entranced, we would hear, suddenly, the beat of combat boots on cobbled pavement, muffled at first, then growing louder, and then a song would rise up and shatter the stillness, silence the voice of the reader, destroy feelings and images. It could have been any of the marching songs that reverberated in the streets of Berlin in those days. Perhaps we heard:

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Es zittern die morschen Knochen
Der Welt vor dem grossen Krieg.
Wir haben die Fesseln zerbrochen.
Für uns war's ein grosser Sieg.
Wir werden weiter marschieren
Bis alles in Scherben fällt!
Denn heute gehört uns Deutschland
Und morgen die ganze Welt.

The world's brittle bones tremble
Before the great war.
We have broken the chains.
A great victory was ours.
We will march on
Until everything lies in ruins!
Because today we own Germany
And tomorrow the whole world.

Whether the incident happened exactly as I describe it, whether it happened at all, doesn't matter. The time was full of such searing contrasts—in sights and sounds, in thoughts and feelings. Still in our malleable years, we lived in a world of tension, conflict, and irreconcilable contrasts (not, as popular notion about Nazi Germany often has it, in a black-and-white world characterized, on one hand, by hysterical unity under the swastika banner and, on the other, by determined opposition). There had to come for us—for those, at any rate, who were pure at heart—the moment when we had to ask ourselves: What is true? The Germany of great German literature that seemed to have no spokesmen in the marketplace, or the Germany of the streets, the radio, and the public press? It was of course the old duality that has fascinated sociologists and critics of literature at least since the age of Flaubert: creative imagination versus reality. The tension has always existed; it always will. Literature does not rule life. But it grows out of life, out of the deepest soil that nourishes the life of a people, the life of a nation. Can a whole people deny its own springs? Destroy its roots? Heinrich Heine, in one of his prose works, once defined sentimentality as the spirituality of materialism. Unable to believe in God, the materialist, whom Heine equates with the atheist, intoxicates himself with sentiments, substitutes feelings for faith to still the hunger of his mind for truth and the longing of his soul for beauty. Perhaps that explains in part the psychoneurosis so characteristic of the Germany in which I grew up. Sentimentality and brutality are but two faces of the same demon: the SS officer, whip in hand, inspecting the barracks of a concentration camp, while carrying in his hip pocket a volume with the poems of Rainer Maria Rilke; a commando leader having his men burn down a Ukrainian village in the morning and joining them at night in singing Schubert's

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Lieder; and a Hitler relaxing after a day's work by listening to Beethoven's Ninth Symphony.

At one time during my last few years at the gymnasium, some of my classmates and I pooled our allowances to subscribe to a literary newsletter that published book and theater reviews and critical articles on every facet of the world of German culture. The editor's name, which I have forgotten, was then well known among literate people, and I believe his privately circulated publication was a clandestine effort to publicize his views after he had been discredited by the regime. Whatever the purpose and source of the letter, it gave our little group of some eight or ten boys the satisfaction that we were participating in a free and spirited and, above all, critical discussion of adult life, and that we had grown up to read things that were not taught in German class, that were, in fact, not supposed to be taught and read at all. It was, we felt, a conspiracy of the literati. Reading that newsletter, discussing it among ourselves and, in some charmed moment, with one or another teacher whom we trusted, sharpened our sense of alienation even more and made us question to what extent, and how, literature can be a guide to living or, perhaps, extend an invitation to commitment to living for a purpose. I don't know what happened to the newsletter or its editor, but I kept in touch with most of the boys of the "conspiracy," and with others who thought and felt like us, long enough to recall what happened to them. Compromise, the flight into sentimentality, was impossible for them: they took literature too seriously, loved it too deeply. Most of them chose the escape route of inner emigration. Two or three of them, when their beliefs were tested on the battlefields of Poland or Russia, committed suicide. Only a few survived the war.

Since my immigration to America three decades ago, I have had to revise some of the views on German literature and history that I had formed in school. Reading Heinrich Heine's prose works for the first time, for example, taught me a new and different way of appraising the masters of the German language whom my teachers had revered unquestioningly; and the historical books and essays of Golo Mann, the second oldest son of Thomas Mann, helped me to recognize what my teachers may have known but may not have dared to tell us: the many ways in which Germany's political life is, and always has been, profoundly and often fatefully linked to German letters. Yet for some twenty of these thirty years, I never went back to the bookcase of my childhood, until one of the corpses in this morgue paid me an unbidden visit that awoke many of the dead ones whom I had once loved but had long forgotten.

On a shelf in my study in Oak Park, Illinois, stand six books that had once belonged in the apartment in Berlin: two novels by Jakob Schaffner, and one each by Hermann Hesse, Hermann Sudermann,

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Hans Carossa, and Selma Lagerlöf. They were all serious, high-minded writers, humanists whose works could be found in any "good house" of the German middle class of my youth. Hans Carossa, a practicing physician, was befriended with and influenced the writings of Thomas Mann, Rainer Maria Rilke, and Hermann Hesse. Selma Lagerlöf, the Swedish novelist whose *Gösta Berling*, a novel about a wayward priest, created a sensation in Europe, was a Nobel Prize winner, as was, of course, Hermann Hesse, the most enduring and influential among the five. Hermann Sudermann, one of the purest representatives of naturalism, had been a brilliant dramatist who castigated in his plays the mindlessness of the Prussian aristocracy's code of honor and the moral corruption of Berlin society during the Kaiser era. Even Jakob Schaffner, the Swiss writer who lived in Berlin and in his old age supported National Socialism, was a man of pure motives and high ideals: he wanted to give an articulate and persuasive voice to the aspirations and values of the "little man," those ignored and forgotten by the smug bourgeoisie of the turn of the century.

The books had accompanied Mother, who was Jewish, when she fled to England in 1939, and again when she moved to New York after the war. In 1951, when I myself arrived in New York as an immigrant, I visited her in her apartment in the Bronx, and the sight of the six volumes delighted me as little else has delighted me in my life. They were a link to my childhood in Berlin, evoking feelings and images that had never died but only remained dormant. These books, I told Mother on another visit years later, when we happened to talk about setting up her will, were the only things I wanted—not the German linen, not the crystal and silver, not the jewelry—only these books. On my last visit to her apartment I found her ill, disoriented, and deserted by the man whom she had married in her old age. The apartment was in shambles; I could find no will, none of her papers. I arranged for her admission to a nursing home and told her landlady—she lived in a two-flat house—that I would return in a month or so to settle her affairs. But when I returned I learned that her husband had reappeared one day, with a truck and two other people, cleaned out the apartment, and vanished without a trace. All he had left was a set of silver cocktail glasses, a set of crystal wine glasses, a box full of worthless things, and the six books. I picked them up one by one. Three of them Mother had inscribed with her name, and one of these bore a date—1930. I was eleven years old then, I mused when I saw the date. Herbert C. Hoover was president of the United States, Henrich Brüning chancellor of Germany. The Weimar Republic, rent by political turmoil and economic distress, was fighting for survival. Nazis and Communists owned the streets of Berlin, shooting each other up. In another three years Hitler would assume absolute power. I put the

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books in my suitcase and, when I arrived home, placed them on a shelf, in a spot where their fine bindings would be conspicuous. I was certain that I would never read them again.

But a book has a life of its own, no matter how much, if anything, one remembers of its content. There clings to it—dormant perhaps for many years—a memory of the place and circumstances of its acquisition, a mood or feeling, particles of your life, a revelation or a dream, or the remembrance of a joy or sadness. You never know what may awaken these spirits, set them free to visit you again.

In the spring of 1980 I toured Germany again and, at the end of the journey, stayed for a few days in Berlin. On the evening of my departure for the States, my host, the same friend with whom I had discussed Theodor Haecker nine years earlier, invited me to accompany him to a theater. They were playing *Fritzchen* (Little Fritz), he said, by Sudermann. *Fritzchen* is a one-act play that belongs in Sudermann's *Morituri* series, three short plays loosely connected by a common motif. Fritzchen, a young Prussian officer, is doomed to die in a duel with the regiment's best sharpshooter who has caught his wife and Fritzchen in the act of adultery. The play caused a sensation at its premiere in 1896 in Berlin, in Germany's most prestigious theater, the Deutsche Bühne, with Josef Kainz, the greatest actor in the history of the modern German theater, as Fritzchen. Now we were sitting in one of those small, suburban neighborhood theaters that had lately become popular in Berlin, places supported by private endowments where one could watch the performance while enjoying a glass of wine or beer. The audience was for the most part young, casually dressed, and well behaved; there were many good, intelligent faces in the crowd. I had not seen the playbill beforehand and was not prepared for what was to come.

What came were three versions of the play, with a brief intermission between each. The first version was played straight, in the setting and with the costumes of the Prussian aristocracy of the end of the nineteenth century. It was a good performance that kept the audience attentive and engaged. The actors were unusually talented, and they played with skill, gusto, and persuasive believability. The applause was long and enthusiastic. The feeling that I had been seeing a period piece had not dampened but rather heightened my enjoyment. In the second version, the setting and the dresses were those of the contemporary counterculture (to put a name on the milieu). Fritzchen and his friend were homosexuals, his father a drunkard, his mother a nymphomaniac, and his fiancée a slut. When Fritzchen, who minutes earlier had occupied the stage in the colorful uniform of an Imperial Prussian lieutenant, appeared wearing black shiny combat boots, skintight black trousers, sunglasses, and a black leather jacket that left his torso exposed,

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the audience roared. The actors kept faithfully to the script, but now every line, every gesture took on a double meaning or had the opposite effect of that intended, or became simply ludicrous. "He whipped me," whispers Fritzchen the officer, confessing to his father in mortal embarrassment what had happened when the sharpshooter had surprised the couple in bed. "He whipped me," squeaks Fritzchen, the homosexual, in undisguised delight. It was a spectacularly well-done parody, and I laughed as heartily as everybody else. The third version was set in what appeared to be the robber's den of an impoverished knight, and now the performance, in the mood of a *marche funèbre*, evoked all the sinister grandeur of a Wagnerian Götterdämmerung. Less polished and less effective than the first parody, the performance seemed anticlimactic.

"You can't play Sudermann anymore, of course," my friend said in a tone of finality when we were discussing the experience over a bottle of wine. I didn't argue with him, but I couldn't bring myself to agree. The straight version of *Fritzchen* had caused no laughter, not even a snicker; the audience had obviously enjoyed it. The parodies had been meant to exemplify, to dramatize, what my friend had said, but I lacked the knowledge to verify or challenge his contention. Something had disturbed me about the parodies; as much as I had enjoyed them, they had left a bitter taste. Unable to trace my discomfort to a specific source, I dismissed my nagging thoughts as bad humor or simply fatigue at the end of a long journey. Yet the next day, on the Lufthansa plane that took me back to Chicago, *Fritzchen* slipped into my reflections again. Relaxed, sipping a cocktail, and suspended at thirty-eight-thousand feet between the two continents that claim the right to my inner world, I could assess the incident with greater clarity and objectivity than the night before, but again its significance eluded me. What was it about the writer Sudermann, or his play, that was causing a jarring conclusion to an otherwise harmonious vacation?

The answer came a few hours later when I entered my study and my eyes fell on the row of books lining a shelf above my desk. Among them stood the six volumes that I had salvaged from Mother's belongings, and I suddenly remembered that one of them was Sudermann's *Lithuanian Stories*. I took the book in my hands, and as I opened it to the title page, I saw that it was one of the three Mother had inscribed with her name. That meant that she herself, not Father, had acquired it. Had I read it as a child, in the apartment in Berlin? I remembered nothing of its content. A list of Sudermann's works at the back of the book told me that the *Stories* had first been published in 1917, and that, at the time Mother had bought it, in the late twenties or early thirties, 70,000 copies had been in print. I also learned that, of the dozen or so novels Sudermann had written, his most famous one, *Frau Sorge* (Frau Sorrow) had reached in

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Mother's time a printing of 295,000. How could I have virtually forgotten the name and works of a writer who only fifty years ago had been immensely popular in Germany?

Lithuanian Stories was a handsome volume, a selection of the Deutsche Buchgemeinschaft (German Book Association), a refined version of today's book clubs. The red leather spine showed a stylized tendril of leaves and blossoms, cut in gold. Scenes of peasant life, traced in fine, chalk-like outlines, adorned the gray linen cover: a cottage, cattle and dogs, a hunter, a man in a boat, a couple in embrace. The heavy paper showed no trace of yellowing, and the type, a German Gothic face, was pleasingly decorative and still crisply black. A bound-in silk ribbon served as bookmark. One of the things, I thought, that had made the bookcase in the apartment of my childhood unforgettable had been its appearance: each volume in the rows of books lining four or five shelves had reflected *Buchkunst*—book art—a term denoting excellence in book production and taste in book design. My mind may have forgotten titles and contents, but my eyes and hands still remember the pleasure they had felt at the sight and touch of these books. Turning the pages of the *Stories* idly, reading a passage here and there, I knew suddenly, unquestioningly, what had caused my discomfort at seeing *Fritzchen:* in Berlin, some twenty-four hours ago, "Sudermann" had meant nothing to me, but the play, the name, had nudged a dormant memory of the bookcase that, fifty years ago, had stood in an apartment not more than a fifteen-minutes' walk from the theater in which I had been sitting. A tiny voice had whispered that Sudermann had something to do with that case, with my childhood, with my own and my parents' inner world, and that these parodies did violence to a remembrance I held precious.

Now the whole morgue stirred and filled with light and voices. Now I knew with certainty that I had read the *Stories* as a child, that Mother had been fond of the book, and that Father had often talked with enthusiasm about Sudermann's dramas. Why else should I have been disturbed by a cleverly conceived and briskly performed parody of a classic drama? Parody is a legitimate form of the performing arts; classics of any age and any country are being parodied continuously. What had happened in that small neighborhood theater in Berlin had had no significance beyond that of a pleasant evening—except for me, because of a link of which I had not even been conscious. Perhaps, I kept thinking, Sudermann can still be *read*, even if my friend thinks he can no longer be played. If he is not obsolete, if he is not ridiculous, then, perhaps, that world which had collapsed with the society for which he wrote, which had been buried in the rubble of bombed-out Berlin—the world which had been that of my parents and of my childhood—may be redeemed.

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I read the *Lithuanian Stories* in two evenings, and it must have been years since a book had given me as much pleasure as this volume, which I had thought I would never open again. With sure, strong, spare strokes, often smiling, sometimes with an ironic twinkle in his eyes, Sudermann evokes the melancholy beauty of the Lithuanian countryside and the lives of simple men and women inextricably bound to the black moor, the impenetrable forests, the sea, and the lonely farms and villages. Yet the four stories that make up the book are the story of humanity everywhere, at any age, a story as timeless and yet as timely as love and hate, guilt and repentance, tears and laughter, hope and despair, doom and redemption. Unlike the writing of most novelists of today, Sudermann's prose is unhurried, yet it still does not lose any of its haunting quality or forcefulness. The leanness of his prose, the power and precision of his images, and the depth of his knowledge of the elemental forces of man's nature brought to my mind writers such as Pär Lagerkvist, Flannery O'Connor, Isaac Bashevis Singer, and, most prominently, Anton Chekhov. Yes, I said with every page, yes, Sudermann is still good company.

Yet what had I proved by this visit to the morgue? Not much more than that a precious link to my childhood was still intact. Had the visit proved that my parents' inner world—judged by the books they had read—had been intact? Perhaps. I had always believed that their literary taste and preferences had been good, right, and (I hesitate to use the word) noble—nobler, at any rate, than the taste of most of my contemporaries. From among all the books that had filled her bookcase in Berlin, Mother had chosen six of the finest to be her companions in exile. The *Stories* had confirmed the validity of that reputation. For me, they had been more readable, more enjoyable, more humanly arresting and authentic than all of the novels by Günther Grass, and some of those by Heinrich Böll, Siegfried Lenz, and Peter Handke, the celebrated German writers of postwar Germany. Above all, it was the moral tone of the *Stories* that delighted me—yes, delighted me because it has virtually disappeared from contemporary works of fiction. Sudermann knew how to write believably, even shockingly, about the murky regions of life—about rape, violence, murder, and destructive passion—but he never lost sight of that spark of the divine that alone makes human beings, any human being, fully human and believable. Moreover, living in the twilight of not being completely forgotten and not clearly remembered, he shares with so many of his fellow corpses in the morgue one gift that raises him above even the best among German writers of today: his language. When I picked up the *Stories*—a volume of sentimental value, by an author I had forgotten—I had not expected that I would once again be touched, elated, by the power, the bewitching charm, the inexhaust-

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ible richness of my native tongue. At first his relaxed style irritated me; my nerves and eyes were used to faster-paced fare, to the prose and dialectics of an age that rushes. Yet as he gradually drew me into the mood and tempo indigenous to the lives he evokes, I began to relax, and soon I felt that rare and exquisitely pleasurable tension that comes from my wanting to savor each masterfully wrought sentence while the driving power of the story compels me to read on. Perhaps, I reflected when I put the *Stories* back on the shelf, Sudermann had become unreadable, unplayable, because *our* lives are a parody of virtue, moral integrity, and man's essential goodness, and *our* language a satire of a mode of expression free from convulsions and corruption. The word *edifying* occurred to me, the beautiful yet much discredited word that connotes planning, purpose, construction, style, and firmness. When did I last read an edifying book?

Golo Mann's exhaustive *German History of the 19th and 20th Centuries* comprises 1,048 pages in the German edition. In the last paragraph of this magnificent work, Mann sums up his reflections on Germany's most tumultuous centuries with a melancholy question: "We hope . . . that our beautiful language does not turn barren and vulgar, but renews its nobility together with everything finding expression in the word. Without such a renewal, what would avail us the power, real and illusionary, we have regained?" The corruption, the vulgarization, of language is universal in the countries of the West. Does the vulgarization of life vulgarize language? Does the corruption of language corrupt values? I leave the judgment on the interdependence of life and language to those more qualified in these matters than I. For me, *Fritzchen,* in its straight version, had expressed nobility—nobility still recognizable and inspiring in the dialogue and setting of a dead era, still appreciated, *nolens volens,* by the audience. So had the *Stories.* Sudermann expressed himself nobly because he was noble and believed in the innate nobility of creation. Ever since I have visited the morgue and listened to his quietly eloquent voice, I have lingered in the restful shadows. Sorry, dear book reviewers, I won't keep up with literary fashions for a while. It will be hard for me not to run out for Saul Bellow's or Walker Percy's latest novel, but the dusky morgue is more illuminating than the marketplace. For one thing, I have begun to read Heinrich Heine's prose works in earnest. I know many of his poems by heart, but his poetry makes up only the tiniest fraction of his works. What a master of the German language! What a prophet of German destiny, this nineteenth-century, tortured, exiled Jew! With whom will I visit next? Which language will I have to speak? German? French? English? Italian? The dusky place is full of clamor. There is Hans Carossa, whose *Dr. Bürger's End* is one of the six volumes that had accompanied Mother

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on her flight. In my late teens I used to be fascinated by him. During the war, I sent his books, one by one, to a cousin who fought in Russia, and the slim volumes sustained him throughout the campaign until he was killed in 1945. Will the physician-writer still cast the same spell? I must find out. Of course, I will find corpses that can't and shouldn't be revived. A morgue is, after all, an anachronistic place by definition. But I may also meet others whom I thought long dead, but who will speak to me at the slightest hint of curiosity or interest. I may even discover that they are related to me, or, who knows, I may fall in love with them. Then, when I return to the glare and noise of the day, strangely refreshed, I will listen with a finer ear, and perhaps with greater equanimity, to my articulate contemporaries, my fellow sufferers of uncertainties and fears.

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Understanding Lebanon

LEILA FAWAZ

In 1983 an unlikely group of Lebanese—small traders, artisans, peddlers, and peasants gathered in the Christian town of Dayr al-Qamar—made the headlines in the international press. For centuries, the Christian inhabitants of that town and of other small towns and villages located in the predominantly Druze district of Mount Lebanon known as the Shuf had lived peacefully among the Druze. But there were exceptions: in 1860 the grievances of the peasants against their landlords in the Christian, northern part of Mount Lebanon escalated into a communal conflict when it spread to the southern, religiously mixed, district of Mount Lebanon, leading to the greatest sectarian outbreak in the history of the Ottoman Empire. On June 20, 1860, Druze attacked Dayr al-Qamar, plundered it, set fire to houses, and killed many of its inhabitants. In the fall of 1983, renewed fighting between Druze and Phalange militia led to a three-month siege by the Druze of Dayr al-Qamar, where thousands of Christians from neighboring areas had gathered.

There were, of course, differences between the two situations. The territorial limits of modern Lebanon were set up in the 1920s, and its boundaries differ from the Mount Lebanon of the nineteenth century. In the 1860s sectarian strife spread all the way to Damascus, which today is not even within the borders of the republic of Lebanon. In the nineteenth century, the conflict involved Druze and Christians—mostly Maronites but also Greek Catholics and Greek Orthodox—and the massacres in Damascus involved Sunni Muslims and Christians who were predominantly Greek Orthodox. Today's conflict involves all of these and still others, including Muslim groups. These differences in locale and in the groups involved have resulted in differences in the intensity and resulting effects of the conflicts.

Despite the differences, however, one common essential ingredient remains. This ingredient makes the comparison of these two situations both possible and useful: the outbreak of sectarian tensions occurs only under a particular set of circumstances. Finding the causes for those outbreaks can therefore cast light on the special nature of the social and political structure of Lebanon, on its future prospects, and on the larger issue of conflicting loyalties in pluralistic societies.

Some older nation-states, but a greater number of younger ones, are pluralistic. Will the passage of time, the policies of government, and the pressures from the outside world be able to forge a lasting unity out of these combinations of small units, each with its own identity and claims? Should unity be required? Can loyalty to a nation win out over loyalty to family, clan, tribe, or any ethnic, linguistic, racial, or religious identification? Although these questions can be legitimately asked of nations all over the world, they are asked of Lebanon more often than of any other. Its future as a nation is being openly called into question by politicians and political scientists alike. Comparing the reasons behind the greatest upheaval in Mount Lebanon and the Syrian interior of the nineteenth century to the greatest conflict in the area in the twentieth century might lead us to some answers.

That comparison is all the more necessary when one realizes that Lebanese history has as often as not been a peaceful one. Contrary

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to what one might deduce from the current strife, the communities of Lebanon and the Middle East have not always been at, or on the verge of, war. To the contrary, there have been long stretches of stability and peace. Mount Lebanon, to use the example that most concerns us here, was essentially tranquil between 1861 and the 1950s; for almost a century the various religious communities lived in harmony. What broke that peace? When was it broken? Why does the conflict so often take the form of religious strife? Both the conflict of 1860 and the present one have their internal, regional, and international aspects. The outbreak of violence was tied each time to a break in the balance of society within the region and the upsetting of the status quo beyond.

In Lebanese society, equilibrium is founded on three essential forces for coexistence. The first is a relative balance of communities, which is not necessarily a static condition—population movements are characteristic of the Middle East—but the condition that, at any given time, the balance between the established communities in an area will be maintained. This balance consists of an acceptance of the place each community has in society and an awareness of the community's limits. There must also be acceptance of the recognized areas of geographical concentration, unthreatened economic and social positions, and a commonality in culture and ways of living.

By the eighteenth century, the main communities of what is now Lebanon had settled in particular districts. On the eastern Mediterranean coast, the Sunnis predominated, but there were also important settlements of Christians (mostly Greek Orthodox) and Jews in the principal trading ports of Acre and Sidon and, to a lesser extent, in Tyre, Beirut, and Tripoli. In the Biqa' Valley and Ba'alback region were Shi'is and pockets of Sunnis. Sunnis dominated the Syrian hinterland; Shi'is were the majority in the south, as they are today. In Mount Lebanon were the Maronites (and other Christians) and Druze. The Maronites dominated to the north and the Druze to the south of an imaginary line running north and south of Beirut. Estimates for that time are inaccurate, but numerical differences in population were not a political factor beyond the fact that Sunnis dominated both in numbers and in their privileged position as co-religionists of the Ottoman rulers. What mattered was that each group knew its position and place and that each was concentrated in its own particular area.

This comparative unity of each ethnic group means that they were used to intercommunal cooperation and coexistence. Particularly in the towns where the Ottoman government and commercial transactions were centered, Sunnis, Greek Orthodox, and others had grown accustomed to dealing with one another. This was less true in the rural communities, especially among the Maronites and Druze of Mount Lebanon, who were farther away from central control and farther away from one another than the urban trading communities were, and who, as a result, were more independent and less flexible than the city dwellers. Despite that difference, however, all shared a common understanding of where they stood in society.

This mutual recognition was based on a number of things: simple realism; carefully delimited geographical, economic, and social positions; the basic social mores and values they all shared; and some Ottoman practices and institutional developments, particularly the "millet" system, whereby the Ottoman government dealt with the communities through their acknowledged religious leaders. The millet system may not have been the elaborate construction historians used to think it was, but the Ottoman government had recognized that the communities existed and that some hierarchy had been established among them. To the extent that the system operated, it affirmed and enhanced mutual recognition, if not equality, among the communities. As long as the status quo prevailed, social relations were harmonious.

In the twentieth century, institutional developments continued to promote intercommunal acceptance and recognition. In particular, Lebanon's political system—rooted in the constitution of 1926, which was revised in 1934, and in an unwritten agreement between sects known as the National Pact of 1943—recognized confessional differences. According to this political system, public offices and parliamentary seats are allocated to the various sects and communities on the basis of their numbers in the census of 1932. Because that census continued to be the

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basis of political representation in Lebanon long after it was outdated, the confessional system ceased to represent the society and became a straitjacket. But, at the time of independence, it helped delineate the place and role of the major Lebanese communities and, in so doing, helped them define their relationships with one another. The relative harmony between the recognized Lebanese communities from the 1940s to the 1970s can be attributed in part to the confessional system. The civil war of 1958 was no exception: it was not a sectarian war, for many Maronites sided against the Maronite incumbent Camille Chamoun.

Maintaining the balance of communities was a second force promoting coexistence in Lebanese history. The recognized place and role of the leading families of every community—a recognized social hierarchy that depended on the ability of communal leaders to speak in the name of their followers and to deliver their constituencies and that insured their status vis-à-vis other communities—comprised that balance. That leading families play a political role is essential in small political entities. The geographical and social structure of both Syria and Lebanon is compartmentalized; defined by small-scale units, Lebanon's politics have always tended to be extremely personal, and social and political equilibrium was based on the leading rival families of various communities knowing one another and adhering to accepted and recognized rules and practices. Through the centuries acquaintance, recognition, and acceptance helped make coexistence possible. In the last years of the Ottoman Empire, these personal ties were reinforced by official participation of the notables in mixed courts, municipalities, the parliaments of 1876 and 1908, and other forums produced by the Westernizing reforms of the nineteenth century.

In the twentieth century, too, the institutions of independent Lebanon have encouraged political alliances among leaders of different communities. In particular, parliamentary elections ensured intra- but not inter-communal rivalries. Within every electoral district, a deputy to parliament is elected not only by members of his own religious community but by members of all religious communities in the district. Every electoral list has candidates of different religious communities running together against other lists of rival candidates from the same communities, guaranteeing political alliances that cut across communal lines.

Lebanon's republican form of government had encouraged the mutual recognition of established elites. The integration of society's upper echelons was encouraged during Lebanon's economic boom in the middle decades of the twentieth century. Originally most of the economically privileged class were Christians. With time, however, Sunnis and others joined the Christians in their prosperity. That prosperity explains the Lebanese acquiescence to a system that gave preferential treatment to Christians, particularly Maronites. To explain Lebanon's present collapse, observers stress the disunity in its confessional political system and imbalanced economic growth, but as long as elites from different communities benefited from the system, the status quo was not threatened. Sunni leaders, who had originally objected to the separation of Lebanon from the rest of Syria after the 1920s, had been co-opted and won over to the idea of a separate Lebanon. Time was beginning to broaden the bases of Lebanon's elite and was working in favor of the integration of traditional leaders and privileged classes.

The existence of a governing institution above the communities and above the leading families was a third force promoting peaceful coexistence. Through a long process that had begun in the sixteenth century and had been consolidated by the eighteenth, one leading family imposed its will upon all the others, and the leader of that family acted as arbiter among the others and as the protector of their interests vis-à-vis the Ottoman authorities. The ruler's legitimacy depended, not on religious, but on secular principles. Whatever his religious allegiance, he was expected to rise above the interests of his own community and to protect the general welfare. Between the late sixteenth and the late eighteenth centuries, these princes of the Mountain were sometimes Druze, sometimes Sunni, sometimes Maronite. That their religious affiliation was secondary is witnessed by the fact that they often weakened rival families of their own denomination by allying themselves with the leading families of other communities.

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The same secular principle underlies the political system of Lebanon today. The president of independent Lebanon is also expected to rise above his community and act as president of all Lebanese. It is no accident that the most tranquil periods of Lebanese history have been governed by presidents with a reputation for being "moderate" Christians. Charles Debbas—the first president and a Greek Orthodox—Bishara al-Khuri, Fuad Shihab, and Charles Hilu—all Maronites—were known as moderates who reached out to communities other than their own. President Amin Gemayel tried to do the same, but his own moderation could not overcome the animosity engendered by the Phalange party he comes from.

The most tranquil periods of modern Lebanese history have been characterized by the alliance of the incumbent president with a powerful Sunni prime minister. The most notable example is the National Pact worked out by President Bishara al-Khuri and Prime Minister Riyad al-Sulh in 1943, which provided an institutional framework that recognized confessional differences.

If there are forces encouraging coexistence in Lebanese history, why has the internal equilibrium broken down? It has broken down, first, because the relative balance of communities was disrupted, both before the outbreak in 1860 and before the present troubles. One cause of the disruption was demographic; shifts in populations upset the numerical equilibrium and the geographical concentration of communities. The Maronites in the nineteenth century and the Shi'is in the twentieth increased their population to the point of seriously upsetting the balance among the communities. In the eighteenth century, a Maronite population explosion led many of them to migrate to southern Lebanon, where the Druze had previously lived unchallenged. In Lebanon, the last official census remains that of 1932, but birthrates and population movements, including the exodus by Shi'is from the rural districts of southern Lebanon to Beirut and other areas, leave no doubt that the country is witnessing a sizable demographic change. Particularly important has been the relative explosion of the Shi'i population, which has seriously undermined the demographic foundations on which Lebanon's government rests.

Demographic changes in themselves would not have been so threatening to the republic had they not been accompanied each time by major economic and social disruptions. In the nineteenth century, the growth of European influence in the Ottoman Empire and the effects of the Industrial Revolution combined to benefit Christians and Jews at the expense of Muslims. Minorities had always been well treated in the Ottoman Empire, but now the Christians were given an advantage, and they already constituted the largest group of non-Muslim subject peoples in the empire. They were protected as co-religionists by the various European powers in a way, and to a degree, that neither the weakening Ottoman government nor any other power was able or willing to give to the traditionally privileged Sunnis. Druze benefited from British paternalism, but not to the extent enjoyed by the Christian and Jewish minorities.

In the twentieth century, the Christians continued to enjoy economic ascendancy in Lebanon, especially under the French Mandate (1920–1943), which solidified Maronite supremacy. After independence a prosperous class of Sunnis and others shared the Christians' privileged position; but in 1975 when war broke out, the uneven distribution of wealth that gave the upper hand to the Christians was the most visible outcome of the country's prosperity. Since the 1950s, Lebanon has been the financial and trading center of the Middle East; its rapid modernization left in its wake an increasingly radical and destitute population. This large and highly visible class of underprivileged began to turn Beirut's suburbs into a poverty belt; it consists chiefly of Shi'is, Sunnis, Palestinians, and others. These people had no stake in maintaining the balance among Lebanese communities—in fact, had nothing to lose by its destruction—and could easily be manipulated by interest groups inside and out that were bent on challenging the Lebanese political system.

Uneven economic growth affected not only inter-sectarian, but also intra-sectarian, relations. Within every community and sect, the loss of social mobility affected the popularity of traditional leaders. This process had only begun in 1975, when the underprivileged of the communities rallied around the rich to fight other communities. The polarizations of war do not necessarily reflect innermost feel-

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ings, but the popularity and credibility of traditional leaders were clearly diminishing. A major source of disruption in Lebanon today is precisely this erosion of the status of the leading families.

In the nineteenth century, a whole set of international and regional factors undermined their power. Some factors were economic: the integration of Mount Lebanon and the Syrian region into the Western-dominated economy, and the consequent growth of the new, mostly Christian, urban merchant classes. Other factors undermining the power of the leading families were more political in nature, such as the threat to the Ottoman regime in the 1830s by the Ottoman governor of Egypt, Muhammed Ali Pasha, who challenged his overlords by conquering the entire Syrian region. The changes in the balance of power between the weakened Ottoman government and the assertive European powers also had their effects on the leading families. Taken together, these developments undermined the power of the traditional feudal families of Mount Lebanon—especially the Druze—and the traditional urban elites, particularly the Sunni notables.

In Mount Lebanon, the Christian feudal families also lost power to the new merchant classes, but a more general Christian political ascendancy was under way. One signal came sometime in the late eighteenth century with the conversion of the princes of Mount Lebanon to Maronite Christianity. Another signal was the reorganization (under European pressure) of Mount Lebanon in the 1840s and again in the 1860s. Its reorganization after the civil war of 1860 reunified Mount Lebanon under a Christian ruler who was advised by an assembly of representatives from the different sects of the Mountain. This ruler could not be a native of the Mountain. The reunification under a Christian reflected the new realities of the period—that is, the changed political balance between Christians and Druze.

In the present century internal, regional, and international developments have again weakened the control of traditional leaders over their constituencies and have created alternatives to them. The political system devised in the 1930s made room for the traditionally dominant communities and their leaders, but it was not flexible enough to recognize and accommodate new demographic, economic, and social forces that surfaced in the next decades. In Lebanon the Shi'is and others have expanded well beyond the political role allocated to them. From outside Lebanon, refugee groups—such as the Palestinians—have come in to disrupt a fragile balance of older communities that had no room left for newcomers.

The traditional leaders have been challenged by alternative leaderships inside and outside the country. Nasserism, Ba'thist ideologies, Palestinian nationalism, populist Islamic movements, and Khomeinism all have weakened the hold of traditional Sunni and Shi'i leaders. Among the Maronites, no foreign ideologies have captured the imagination of the rank and file, but, in the Maronite community, rival leaders have challenged the older established feudal families and have fragmented Maronite secular and religious leadership. The result is that the traditional Christian and Muslim leaders are challenged by new, popularly based ones drawn from humble backgrounds.

Since the war of 1975, these new leaders have often been heads of militias. Only one traditional leader has managed to survive, but he presents himself, not as someone of a high-ranking family or from the religious community he stood for, but as an advocate of one of the more secular, semi-radical ideologies. This was the Druze feudal chief in the Shuf, Kamal Jumblat, who between the 1950s and 1970s broadened the base of his appeal beyond his Druze followers to create the Progressive Socialist party, now led by his son. Aside from him, however, traditional elites continue to appeal to ties, allegiances, and loyalties rather than to the mostly radical and populist ideologies favored by the new leadership.

The appeal of the ideologies is still rudimentary. The most novel aspect of the new leaders often lies not in the ideological content of their messages but in the humbleness of their social origins. Still, they do represent a trend away from traditional politics, and, just as the Christians did in the nineteenth century, they draw their strength from outside Lebanon. While, in the nineteenth century, European backing gave Christians the upper hand, today the political balance seems to tip in favor of the popular leaders backed by radical Arab regimes or revolutionary Iran.

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These new leaders have no more commitment to the balance that existed among the communities before the war than do the masses they attract; they have little reason to protect a political system too inflexible to make room for them, and they are not interested in making alliances with traditional politicians. This aggravates an already serious breakdown of communications among politicians.

The third major reason why internal equilibrium has broken down in Lebanon is the loss of neutrality by the supreme authority. In the 1830s the last strong prince of the Mountain, Bashir II Shihab (1788–1840), sided with the Egyptian foreign invaders against the members of communities under his rule. His successor, the last Shihab prince, Bashir III (1840–1842), promoted the interests of the Ottoman central government, if only out of weakness. After him, the princedom of Mount Lebanon ended and was replaced between 1842 and 1860 by the double rule of a Maronite leader in the north of Mount Lebanon and a Druze leader in the south. Both were under the Ottoman provincial authority on the coast and unable to satisfy the needs of their populations, until finally the discontent boiled over in 1860.

In independent modern Lebanon, the presidency has never really been freed from the political influence of the ruling clans. In time of crisis it has therefore been unable to stand aloof, or at least to convince enough communities that that was what it was doing.

The differences between the regional and international situation in 1860 and in the 1970s largely account for the difference in the stakes of each conflict. Essentially, the conflict of 1860 was, and remained, a civil war. The conflict since 1975, although it has an internal Lebanese dimension, has also been a theater of war for all the hostile powers of the Middle East: a Syrian war, an Israeli war, a Palestinian war, an Arab-Israeli war, an Arab war, a great powers and superpowers conflict. The internal dimension of the present conflict is often secondary to the foreign struggles being fought out on its territory. As evidence of that, one need only note that sectarian hostilities appeared late in the game, after years of war, and have been relatively limited.

That the stakes of the conflict were more local in 1860 than they are today accounts for the differences of magnitude, duration, and difficulties of eventual resolution. The number killed and injured in these wars is not certain, but the greater order of magnitude in the present conflict is undeniable. Kamal Salibi, the most reliable historian providing estimates for 1860, mentioned that in less than four weeks of fighting in Mount Lebanon some 11,000 Christians were killed, 4,000 died of destitution, and about 100,000 became refugees. To these estimates must also be added the figures of those killed in Damascus: perhaps 5,000 in a day, plus 2,000 to 5,000 refugees from the surrounding country. It is estimated that the number of victims for nine years of the present war is from 60,000 to 100,000 killed, at least double that number wounded, and perhaps three or more times that figure dislocated, often more than once. Without downplaying the enormity of the massacres of 1860 or the devastations they caused—it was undeniably the greatest upheaval in the history of Lebanon and Syria up to the twentieth century—the present conflict in Lebanon surpasses in destructiveness anything that preceded it, due in part both to modern technology and to the greater number of local, regional, and international hostile parties involved. In both 1860 and the present, internal disequilibrium triggered conflict, but regional and international considerations determined its duration and magnitude.

Similarities between the regional and international factors of the nineteenth- and twentieth-century conflicts are also striking. The Ottoman Empire in the nineteenth century and its successor states in the twentieth became involved in the wars in Lebanon in a number of ways. They allowed conflict to go on (note the Ottoman passivity at the onset of the 1860 massacres and the limited Arab reaction to events in Lebanon in 1975); or they became a party to the conflict (note the Ottoman sympathy to the Druze of Mount Lebanon and to Sunnis of Damascus in 1860 and the involvement today of Syria, Israel, Palestinians, Libya, Iran, and others with various factions in Lebanon); or they claimed to help resolve the conflict (in 1860 the Ottoman foreign minister Fuad Pasha came to Lebanon and the Syrian region to negotiate peace, and today, less convincingly, the powers of the region pursue their summits, rounds of talks, "peacemaking" military interventions, and other initiatives). The degree of involvement

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by the regional powers in the affairs of Lebanon has been more pronounced in the present conflict; nothing in the Ottoman period could, or did, equal today's lavish training, financing, and arming of groups in Lebanon by its neighbors. Technology has made possible a level of interference undreamed of a century ago.

Another similarity between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is that conflict in Lebanon has been tied to disturbances outside it, where major upheavals were also occurring. In the nineteenth century, challenges to Ottoman supremacy were coming not only from within the Ottoman Empire (from Muhammed Ali Pasha in Egypt and national movements among Ottoman subject peoples elsewhere) but also from without (the Ottomans met defeat at the hands of Russia and others, and economically the Ottomans had been subjugated to industrialized Europe). The Ottoman regime was on the defensive, and its rule was being undermined. The rise of Christian and Jewish minorities and the rising influence of the colonial powers in the Middle East also undermined the traditionally privileged groups. Outbreaks in Aleppo, Mosul, Jedda, Damascus, Mount Lebanon, and elsewhere—of which the civil war of 1860 was only the most intense—can be attributed to the waning of the Ottoman regime. In the twentieth century, the sources of instability have multiplied as the competing nation-states of the Middle East take on the Ottoman Empire's role. The three most important sources of instability are Arab-Israeli, inter-Arab, and inter-Muslim relations.

Now, as in the nineteenth century, the potential for upheaval within an individual country and within the region is weakest when one regional center clearly dominates. In the nineteenth century, Ottoman domination in Syria was seriously undermined by the Egyptian occupation in the 1830s. The Ottomans returned to Syria in 1840, but only with the help of the great powers. Challenged by a subject country, the Ottomans were restored only with outside support. The message was not lost on the local populations. In the twentieth century, the proliferation of regional centers in the Middle East has in itself been a source of great instability. Lebanon seems to fare poorest when no Arab power is clearly dominant. Lebanon learned—the hard way—to live with Nasser between 1958 and 1970. With the proliferation of centers of radicalism since then—Ba'thism, Palestinian nationalism, Islamic radicalism, and the rest—Lebanon has suffered far more. If Syria continues to strengthen its position in the Arab world—and that is not certain—it will be interesting to see whether peace will come to Lebanon. If peace does come, it will be at a price, no doubt.

If a small country like Lebanon seems to fare better when there is a dominant power in the region, the opposite applies for international equilibrium. In both the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries, a concert of great powers or superpowers has been critical for the promotion of peace. In the first half of the nineteenth century, peace in the Syrian region was disturbed when the two dominant powers—France and England—took opposite positions over the conquests of Muhammed Ali Pasha. After 1860, peace came to Mount Lebanon because the Concert of Europe, in collaboration with the Ottoman government, created the settlement for the Mountain that ushered in the period of stability between 1861 and World War I. In the twentieth century, the superpowers have been more polarized than the great powers ever were in the Middle East a century ago; and, despite feeble attempts to work out a superpower entente in the region, polarization continues to be the dominant theme. The absence of the Soviets in the American-sponsored Israeli-Egyptian negotiations—and, more generally, the lack of a superpower consensus in the Middle East, which was so important to the resolution of the 1860 conflict—makes 1985 very different from 1860.

The superpowers have also been more involved in the Middle East than the great powers were before them. There is no counterpart in the nineteenth century to the depth of superpower involvement in the Middle East, such as the Americans with Israel, or, to a lesser extent, the Soviets with Syria. Even the French commitment to the Maronites in the nineteenth century was no match. In 1860, the Ottoman government along with the Concert of Europe settled the Lebanon situation because the great powers agreed on the protection of the Christians and because, despite their involvement with local groups, the European powers kept a certain distance. That

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distance has been lost in the twentieth century. Superpower involvement in the Middle East means that their every move is tied by commitments to one or another of their Middle Eastern allies and that, consequently, the credibility of each power vis-à-vis the other parties in the region is nonexistent. No wonder that throughout nine years of war an international agreement regarding Lebanon has not been possible.

What lessons can be drawn from the comparison between 1860 and the present for the resolution of conflict in Lebanon? The first is that the solution to Lebanon's problems, like the problems themselves, have to emanate from within. They cannot be imported from outside. Commendable as it may be to recommend secular political institutions for Lebanon, the political structure that evolved in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is based on religious communities. Short of revolutionary change, which is unlikely—even a decade of war has not produced it—any solution has to allow room for religious pluralism in politics. The solution could be a more comprehensive and flexible form of confessionalism, a new version of the "millet" system, or a carefully outlined system of cantons that would take into consideration the existence of mixed districts. Since the territory of modern Lebanon includes a greater area and more diverse groups than did Mount Lebanon, with its predominantly Maronite and Druze populations of the nineteenth century, the resolution of the conflict will be more difficult to achieve than it was a century ago when it had to satisfy only two dominant communities. It will also be more difficult to incorporate religious pluralism into new institutions, as few modern political systems can deal satisfactorily with diversity or accentuate it as the "millet" system did. In modern times, the pressures of nationalism and secularism have done just the opposite, and it is difficult to turn the clock back. If a new formula that would institutionalize diversity without denying national identity could be worked out for Lebanon, however, it could become a new model for other pluralistic societies.

A second conclusion is that, if the disturbance of communal balance is a major source of conflict, then the restoration of communal balance is indispensable for peace. In the nineteenth century, Sunnis and Druze accepted the inevitable European-backed Christian ascendancy, as their acceptance of the 1861 settlement for Mount Lebanon—with a Christian ruler at its head—clearly indicates. Today it is the Christians' turn to recognize that concessions are inevitable and that the new social forces in Lebanon have to be given political representation.

Finally, the imposition of a settlement always involves regional and international powers. In 1860, the crisis was resolved by international action. In the present, the cooperation of Lebanon's neighbors, of other regional powers, and of the superpowers is indispensable for the resolution of the conflict, given Lebanon's internal fragility and small size. It is all very well to keep asking the Lebanese to pull their act together. But without regional cooperation and international pressure, no peace is possible.

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Behind the Blue Pencil

Censorship or Creeping Creativity?

JACQUES BARZUN

One of the main differences between British and American publishing lies in the role assigned to the copy editor. Books from London often show inconsistencies of form—say in footnotes or citations—and other evidences of inattention as well. And British authors who are being published in the United States for the first time freely resent (and ignore) the endless queries, suggestions, and alterations that some unnamed hand has sprinkled over their finished work.

The cause of these phenomena is the license given in this country to the copy editor (now more often called manuscript editor). That some additions to the script on its way to the compositor (now more often "the keyboarder") are needed can be granted at once. The correction of typos, the striking out of hyphens at the end of lines, the indication of em-dashes, together with the assigning of point size to heads and subheads, can no longer be left to the judgment and taste of printers, because of the great variety of designs, the decline of artisanship, and the substitution of the typewriter and its offspring for the author's own hand.

But out of the need for this intervention has grown a practice which latterly has been changing the very idea of authorship. There is nothing new in the fact that it is now impossible to know a writer's usage in punctuation or spelling. What appears in print over his name is the punctuation and spelling of "the house" or the individual editor. But within the last few years the rest of a writer's proper business—diction, grammar, idiom, and syntax—has also fallen under the editor's sway; these matters of style are not the free choice of the ostensible author, but rather of the anonymous co-author brought in after the author has said his last word.

The original intention of such a post-mortem review was no doubt worthy; it was to spare the author (and the firm) embarrassment over errors—slips of the pen or of the mind, to which every writer is liable and for whose correction before print he is duly grateful.

But soon other tendencies and purposes began to distort that intention. The spread of specialized knowledge, coupled with that of half-education, created a new class of authors—people who knew things of value but wrote badly. For the sake of their information, the publisher in effect appointed a semi-ghost to assist the inarticulate and illiterate. It continues to be true that a good half of the scripts accepted for publication by book and magazine editors are "first-rate stuff but needs a lot of work"—these words are virtually a technical term of the trade.

At the same time, the misplaced regard for science and technology has made the common mind avid for trivial details and correspondingly fearful of small errors. In reading matter now, so long as the date of birth and the middle initial are correct, one can indulge with impunity in the most whopping errors of sense and judgment. To ensure this perfection in trifles, researchers and copy editors painstakingly scan and scribble, after which the author, faced with his guilt and humbled by the many changes, nods his consent. It is a far cry from the attitude of Sir Isaac Newton, who prevented a misprint from being corrected in

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his *Principia*, saying that competent readers would automatically correct it for themselves.

Partly because editors know that they are dealing with small things and wish to enlarge their scope, and partly because their task lies within the narrowest range of what may be right or wrong, they have begun to challenge and change in written work whatever deviates from their own norm. This raises a question which is rather important for the art of prose: who is this editor and where has he or she picked up that norm?

In the nature of things, editing copy cannot be one of the high, and highly paid, professions. The great majority of manuscript editors are recent college graduates "interested in publishing." The older, experienced ones tend to be free-lance workers at home—any person with good eyesight and who is conscientious can learn the routine. Only for encyclopedias, technical works, and the like, is knowledge of subject matter required. But all copy editors show a common bias: vigilance breeds suspicion, and the suspect is the writer. What he has set down is ipso facto questionable and incomplete; anything not utterly usual is eccentric and reprehensible; what the editor would prefer is preferable.

Before describing the misconceptions, intellectual and literary, that underlie the present extensive revision of works that do not need it, let me illustrate the practice by examples from recent experience, mine and that of colleagues who have expressed their deep annoyance—sometimes their rage—at having to reread and restore their text in order to make it truly theirs in sense and sound. The reason for exploding in private is that the ritual of altering and reversing alterations has come to be seen by all parties as the price paid for being published.

Original Wording:	Altered to:
consecutiveness	continuity
solely an historian	not a mere historian
founded an empire	created an empire
refused their minds	closed their minds
several instances	various instances
Donald Duck	Mickey Mouse
has got out of hand	has gotten out of hand
the remark fitted the case	the remark fit the case
not so many as	not as many as
But he soon gave up	However, he soon gave up
for they thought	because they thought
in this printing	as of this printing
sent to whoever was in charge	sent to whomever was in charge

In this random sampling one finds not merely the wilful substitution of one idea for another but at least four gross mistakes inserted as improvements. In the first five changes the editor was clearly incapable of distinguishing meanings. Continuity is not the same thing as consecutiveness. Several instances are not necessarily various—and so with the rest.

In the Donald Duck example, the text referred to the fiftieth anniversary of that creation. The editor evidently missed the news report of this historic occasion and preferred to cite—heedlessly—a character she thought even more universal.

The next three "improvements" show a leaning toward colloquial, indeed rural, usage; and in any case all three originals are entirely clear, usual, in no need of amendment. In the two that follow, *but* and *for* are disallowed in favor of longer, more textbookish words that are thought equivalent, though they are not. Comment is superfluous on the *as of* borrowed from business English and the grammatical blunder *to whomever is.*

This last error springs from plain ignorance in the very domain where editing lays down the law. But that deficiency is not limited to matters of language. Few copy editors have had time for wide reading before they start on their peculiar form of censorship. They have been to college, and they are not much further advanced by the books they read and the way they have to read them. As a result, they remain unaware of certain idioms, allusions, and conventions that are by no means abstruse. For example, an author who used in the proper context "the liquid element" found the phrase crossed out, the word *water* substituted, and the marginal comment: "Pompous, don't you think?"

That the term was traditional for one of "the four elements" was something as unsuspected by the corrector as the convention governing the citation of proper names. On this point a

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colleague relates how a book review she wrote came out editorially peppered with needless first names—*John* Mill (*sic*), *Matthew* Arnold, and so on. When she remonstrated she was told, "But there were two authors with those last names!" That one writes *James* Mill and *Thomas* Arnold when referring to the less famous pair was a new idea. There were also two English poets named Pope and two historians of England named Macaulay, but fortunately editors have never heard of the obscure ones, or we would have to trot out "Alexander" and "Thomas Babington" at every turn.

Proper names are also linked with the editorial assumption that every article or chapter must supply all facts and prove 100 percent educational—an encyclopedia entry. And so first names, dates, titles are added in full, often to the detriment of good writing and sometimes of its accuracy. Thus a contributor to the *New York Times* was recently taken to task for referring to "Chief Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes." He replied: "The error was not mine, but in the final editing, which I did not review before publication; my manuscript referred to the Justice simply as 'Holmes.'" I may add that for years now I have lived in the certainty that when I write *Buffon* I shall find *Georges* stuck in front of it in my edited text. The editor, who possibly has never heard of Buffon, looks him up to find a first name—any first name—so as to make sure that no one will confuse him with another: think of the Bach family! Of course, there was but one great naturalist of the name, and—what is too bad—no such person as Georges Buffon ever existed. Georges Leclerc, Comte de Buffon is what one must write if one is to nurse the copy editor's dream of full disclosure. Meanwhile the ancient question occurs: *Quis custodiet*, etc.—"Who will cuss the custodians?"

So far, I have dealt only with meaning in the sense of denotation; but there is the apt use of connotation which, when coupled with right rhythm, is the prerequisite of all good prose, prose that says what the author thinks *and feels*, besides being pleasant to read. In the phrases quoted above, for example, a reader unconsciously responds to the distinction that an empire is *founded* by force but *created* by fiat—the difference between Genghis Khan and Disraeli. Similarly, if one writes: "At that time the guitar was not thought of as capable of serious music," the alteration to "was thought not capable" distorts the implication. The first wording describes opinion; the altered one (falsely) describes the instrument.

Copy editors are doubtless too intent on the mechanics of script-marking to give due thought to nuance and rhetoric. They are especially weak on the use of *a* and *the*, which they take out or insert capriciously. For example, I write "deserves a more ecumenical attention"; the *a* is stricken out, which changes the comparison from quality to quantity. In a technical discussion, the wording was: "experience, meaning here the actually lived." Omit *the* because it is a bit unusual and the sense disappears.

The same blindness spoils rhetoric, just as the matching deafness ruins rhythm. A fellow writer turned an old French folk tale into a child's book. He wrote: "The Devil made the bridge very strong; an army could pass over it—even riding elephants." The point here is the exaggeration, which naturally, necessarily, comes as an afterthought. His copy editor killed the point (and the charm) by recasting: "An army, even riding elephants, could pass over it."

It is sentence rhythm that often dictates whether or not one cites a proper name in full (Mill, instead of John Stuart Mill); whether one puts an adjective before or after the noun ("all things necessary" instead of "all necessary things"); whether one writes "the nineties" or the "1890s." But the idol of Consistency dominates the copy editor's religion, and stylistic variations for the ear as for the mind are ruthlessly cut down. In a lifetime of publishing I have not found one "improver" who ever considered rhythm. I incline again to the belief that this is not for want of native ability; the cause lies in the job itself, which develops the visual reflex at the expense of—reflection.

Besides, not being professional writers, copy editors are seldom aware that prose, like any other art, calls for frequent compromise among desirable aims—sound and sense, force and fluidity, clearness and precision, emphasis and nuance, wit and truth. This very need for balance rules out consistency in the use of *any* component of writing. Each sentence and paragraph is a special case. Style itself demands the opposite of mechanical

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regularity, even in punctuation and capitalization, let alone in the placing of *only*, the splitting of infinitives, the choice of *which* and *that*, and other bugbears of the manuscript scanner.

When such a person does have the ambition to write, the situation is very likely worse. For the creative urge, which already makes for gratuitous tampering at ordinary times, now knows no bounds and produces a virtual rewriting. Not long ago, having recommended a young writer's book to a university press, I was asked for a preface as a condition of publication. I complied, though skeptical about the utility of such prefaces. When copy edited, my brief remarks showed thirty-five alterations in four-and-a-half pages. Only about one-third affected punctuation and the use of capitals.

This impressive performance is not always equaled, but its ratio of words passed and words challenged is not uncommon either. A member of the innocent public may ask, "What does it matter if you are shown these changes and allowed to restore your original?" It matters in time and effort. Rehabilitating four-and-a-half pages is a nuisance; doing the same for a book of 400 pages is a grievance. Nor is this all. No matter how often a conscious writer goes over his copy before publication, he always looks for still better ways of expressing his meaning. He pursues that meaning, his thought. Editor's alterations compel him to watch at the same time for garblings of that thought. Some stand out, flagrant and unashamed; others—commas added, capitals struck down, inversions and omissions, tend to be overlooked amid one's self-corrections. All the *a*'s and *the*'s trifled with, the dashes and semicolons interchanged, require analytic thought to be seen as unacceptable. Even worse, a misplaced sense of fair play comes over the writer when he is put on the defensive: from weighing the changes and arguing his case step by step, he or she comes to think: "After all, should I have it my own way all the time? Let's give the laborious mole a chance to score as often as we decently can."

This is absurd, but it suggests to me a possible way to settle the serious issue I have outlined here, serious because present practice involves a great waste in two persons' lives, because it threatens the authenticity of the published word, and because it tends ever toward flattening out, standardizing—through pedantry, the literal mind, the love of the usual, which are forms of vulgarity.

The deadlock between writer and corrector is produced, obviously, by the opposition of two legitimate interests: publishing only material that is in fairly literate form and putting one's name only to the words one has chosen to write. I believe these interests relate to two classes of work. If, as in my mangled preface, some 120 lines of prose truly require correction once every three lines, then I am not fit to introduce a good book, and those who have published my writings for the past sixty years have been criminally at fault. But if those lines are intelligible as they stand and look like the work of a good craftsman (though some bright young person might prefer changes at regular intervals), then let the copy go untouched, except for the mechanical markings needed by the printer.

Contrariwise, if the preface, article, or book frequently offends grammar and usage, spends too many words on each idea, and baffles common understanding, then let it be assigned to an experienced writer-editor who, with the author's preliminary consent, will put it into publishable shape.

This division would not debar the copy editor of the healthy manuscripts that bypass remedial treatment from raising a few questions, *provided:* (a) that they are well-considered and (b) that they are not incorporated in the copy but written on slips ("flags") attached to the margin. As I said at the outset, every writer is liable to lapses; an ambiguity, a false linkage, or a bit of non-sense (Editor: *stet* hyphen) may escape even close revision. Every writer, too, will be grateful to the publisher's reader who catches such an error and saves him the embarrassment of discovering it for the first time in print. But this form of help in demonstrable need differs *toto caelo* from the promiscuous depredation which has been allowed to become part of publishing and to which writers alone among artists have tamely permitted themselves to submit.

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Readers' Rights & Writers' Property

The Public Lending Right

WILLIAM B. GOODMAN

In ten countries today—but not in the United States—each time a book is borrowed from a public library, its author is credited with a small payment or library usage royalty. This royalty collects over a year and is paid in an annual lump sum from the public funds of the treasuries of the central governments involved. The system, which developed after the Second World War, first in Denmark in 1946 and most recently in Great Britain in 1979, has several names, the most well-known of which is Public Lending Right, or PLR. It is a confusing name for what it means, which is a fee for service—the reading by a public library patron of a book in copyright—paid to the copyright owner, who is almost always the writer of the borrowed book, and is better described, as it is in Iceland, as an author's right rather than the public's. But the acronym *PLR* is the term in English that denotes the system and is well enough known to have a life of its own. The term hardly matters. The question, which comes out of the blue to most Americans, is whether there will be anything like agreement in this country that PLR is a legitimate remedy for what writers and their friends claim is an abuse as old as public libraries.

Every time a book in copyright is borrowed from a library, the claim goes, what amounts to an act of legalized theft is committed—what a writer I work with angrily calls "the biggest theft of services since slavery was abolished." At first blush, this is hard to see as a grievance, not only because we are so used to free public libraries and hold them in such high esteem, but because it is equally hard to see ourselves as thieves when we borrow books from them. Libraries, after all, are part of our civic religion, our sense of the rightness of free access to knowledge, to education, to equal opportunity. Borrowing a book from a public library without charge to the reader is an action we automatically affirm. Millions have library cards. We work at getting our children comfortable in libraries and interested in what they may borrow from them. It is not an accident, after all, that our libraries are freely open to all, but it never seems to occur to us to look at what is actually involved in the way we borrow books from them. It is freeloading, which, when examined, turns out to be theft sanctioned by entrenched custom. To credit such a notion, however, would seem to contradict a deeply embedded American idea: free access to tax-supported libraries is a right, a right as sacred, as familiar and irrevocable as those personal rights to life, liberty, and property enshrined in the Constitution and its amendments. There's no respectable argument against that response. It is true and traditionally American; on examination, however, nothing in it weakens or undercuts the argument for PLR, threatens readers' rights of free access to public libraries, or reduces library service by overwhelming librarians with extra record keeping.

Whatever the argument, however, some writers, like Annie Dillard and William H. Gass, oppose PLR because, mistakenly in my view, they believe it cannot come unless our underfunded and understaffed libraries pay for it—"without socking," Miss Dillard says,

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"library users." Worse, Mr. Gass raises the ante and says PLR is an "act of greed" that is "a direct attack upon the American ideal of a free (and therefore really public) library system." Pretty strong stuff, to be sure, but, again in my view, quite wide of the mark. It misreads the nature of PLR to suppose that to get it our public libraries will have to be transformed into restrictive rental agencies for books. Readers' access to libraries will stay as free as it is now. PLR, once installed, will not amount to much work at the local library level. If the library concerned is one of those in the statistically appropriate national PLR library sample (sixteen in Britain and doubtless more in the U.S.), then it need do nothing more complicated than mail to the national PLR office a duplicate set of the computer tape of withdrawals, which the library now makes in the course of its daily routine.

II

What the incipient public debate on PLR needs most now is a careful look at what sort of transaction borrowing a book from a public library is, and so uncover the kind of property use involved. When a publisher sells a book to a library, or when a library wholesaler does, it is so well understood as to be taken for granted that the result will be repeated borrowing—borrowing without limit, of the book or books involved. The writer as copyright owner receives one and only one royalty payment for each copy sold in such transactions. At best, writers have mixed feelings about such sales. The implied recognition of their work and its unknown national extent, while welcome, is ambiguous. Moreover, it often curdles to resentment. Their publishers share that resentment, but, like the writers concerned, they diplomatically accept it without comment because to say out loud that borrowing a book from a library includes picking the author's pocket would be taken as mean-spirited opposition to the very idea of free public libraries. And neither writers nor publishers are prepared to give even the appearance of undercutting readers and libraries. Still, the essence of the sale of one or more copies of a book to a public library must not be missed. It is not the same thing as one person's purchase of a book at a bookshop or through a book club—a book that may sometimes be lent to a friend.

When a library buys a book, it does so in order to make it available for repeated borrowing by the public. Part of the sale of books to libraries, therefore, is an implicit license to allow the lending of volumes as often as borrowers call for them, and to do so without further payment to the creator of the copyrighted text. What must not be lost here is the fact that the text of a book is property. It belongs to its creator, to the man or woman who wrote it. Copyright—the formal registration of property under law—confirms that property right. Copyright conveys absolute protection for the lifetime of the author, plus a further fifty years to his or her heirs and assigns. The practice is fully protected and long beyond dispute. All this should be obvious in a country where the meaning of property is as plain as it is in ours. Where free borrowing of books from public libraries is concerned, however, the fact that a theft of services is also involved has not been perceived, much less imagined. If that perception is to become widespread, those who advocate PLR for American writers have much missionary work to do.

Librarians, because they fear the expense of PLR will have to be borne by already inadequate library budgets, and because they fear the expensive local administrative burden they assume it represents, are made nervous by PLR. They are ambivalent at best about it and quick to resent the implication that what they do as a valuable public service—the promotion of reading through the circulation of books—could possibly be perceived as disguised theft of income legitimately owed to writers. Librarians know that they have paid public money for every copyrighted book on their shelves. They know they induce reading, that reading is good, that in fact it contributes to the general welfare. To suggest, therefore, that the professional practice of librarianship, whatever else it is, *also* supports *theft* is greeted by librarians first with incomprehension and then with anger. In the long campaign for PLR in Great Britain, most librarians opposed the scheme, though in the end they withdrew their opposition because both the Conservative and Labour parties combined in support of a PLR bill that de-

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fined a scheme under which the full cost of PLR and its administration would be assumed by the government. An American PLR would do the same.

III

PLR is neither charity nor patronage but something more straightforward. It is a fee for the use of property, for services rendered, something akin to and as commonplace as rent. The fee is for reading a text while it is still private property—that is, while copyright holds. Moreover, the application of PLR has nothing to do with literature, whether high, low, or medium.

All books in copyright are equal for PLR. Some of them you may hope will be literature with a capital *L*—Robert Lowell's or Carolyn Forché's poems, say, or William Faulkner's or William Maxwell's novels—but it is not their literary quality that makes them eligible for PLR but their condition as property, as texts in copyright written by writers and owned by them or their heirs. PLR, then, is not a qualitative judgment, not a form of praise, but a much simpler matter—a payment for each borrowing of a book in copyright from a public library.

So much for the basis of PLR. It is a right, and it is so because an American's property cannot be used or taken from him, even in the public's name, and even when the general welfare is served, without permission or payment of just compensation. It is easy to lose sight of this plain property truth about PLR because books are involved. And books spell "culture," which means that before you know it a mild disorientation occurs because of the presumably vulgar connection PLR makes between money, art, and the life of the mind. This sort of silliness is not proper homage so much as it is misplaced moralism. It amounts to a refusal to connect the writer's need to make a living with everybody else's. Such thinking is muddled, false, sentimental, and bad for writers and writing.

While the abstract case for PLR does not depend on the relative poverty of most writers, support for it may depend, to a degree, on a sympathetic recognition of that relative poverty. The nature and extent of this condition, while always vivid in the folklore of authorship, had not been scientifically surveyed in this country until the Author's Guild commissioned the Center for the Social Sciences at Columbia University to prepare a study on the question. That study, "The Columbia Economic Survey of American Authors," directed by Paul W. Kingston, Jonathan R. Cole, and Robert K. Merton, was issued in February 1981. (Curtis Benjamin, former chairman and president of McGraw-Hill Book Company, wrote a dissenting critique of the survey that, while valuable in the way he would revise its design and sharpen its categories of writers, did not overturn its essential finding of a low dollar return for most writers from their work.) The survey's "central message . . . appear[ed] almost from the outset: Most authors can't begin to make ends meet from their writing alone." Half of American writers, in fact, earn less than $5,000 annually from their writing. The representative or median author in the survey "earned a total of $4,775 from writing" in 1979, the year surveyed. To appreciate fully this median figure, it is necessary to consider the general distribution of incomes among authors. A quarter of them actually earned less than $1,000 from their writing in 1979; indeed, 10 percent reported no 1979 income from writing at all. While another 10 percent earned $45,000 and the top 5 percent exceeded $80,000 that year, the 85 percent in the money-making remainder earned far less impressive amounts—that is, the overwhelming majority almost never earned anything approaching a living. Writing, for the majority, then, however much it may have been at the center of their consciousness, did not take up all of their working time. They could not afford to allow it to. So they worked at other jobs, were often partially supported by spouses, and wrote part-time. Writing for most of our writers was and is, in the phrase of Anthony Trollope, "a second profession." There is, in plain fact, no American occupation, however ordinary, when worked at full time, that does not earn its people more in one year than most American writers earn from the annual sale of their books.

The importance of PLR increases when considered in the context of the relative poverty of most writers because it will give them modest additional earned income from their work. PLR will hardly make them rich.

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There's no chance of PLR millionaires because no writer, no matter the extent of the borrowing of his or her books in any one PLR year, shall receive more than a specific maximum. In the United Kingdom, it is £5,000. In the United States, a more populous, larger, and richer country, the maximum might be correspondingly larger, say, $10,000. PLR is justified because it will give writers at last what by property right is theirs. Nothing more, mind you, but for the first time, nothing less.

IV

For those Americans aware of PLR before 1979—a handful of writers, librarians, editors, lawyers, publishers, a congressman or two, and some Author's Guild and PEN activists—most had heard of PLR from England where it began life in 1951 as "the Brophy penny." The term derives from John Brophy (1899–1965), a well-known professional writer, who apparently was unaware of Denmark's PLR system, installed in 1946, and who proposed his penny charge in public libraries as something urgently needed to replace income lost to writers by the decline of the old commercial "tuppenny" lending libraries that were fast being overcome by the greater postwar growth of free public libraries. He would charge borrowers of books from free public libraries half the old commercial two penny borrower's rate—thus "the Brophy penny"—and would pay it somehow to the writers of the books borrowed.

While John Brophy's notion was widely and often hotly discussed, and while his penny "had entered and, indeed, stuck in folk memory," as his daughter Brigid Brophy, the contemporary novelist and critic, says in her indispensable *A Guide to Public Lending Right* (1983), his scheme lacked practical precision and failed. It failed for two reasons: it negated what was "free" in borrowing books from public libraries, and it put an impossible burden on library staffs, who would have to record separately all such borrowings by hand. The first reason was enough to sink it politically, and the second made the proposal seem more expensive to administer in time and money than it was worth. The second reason, moreover, gave librarians the idea that when PLR came, even if it cost their budgets nothing, which they doubted, it would so complicate their working lives that service to the public inevitably would suffer.

The English history of PLR resists easy summary. Suffice it to say that by 1972 when Writers Action Group (WAG) was formed by five professional writers—Brigid Brophy, Lettice Cooper, Maureen Duffy, Francis King, and Sir Michael Levey—the political and practical defects of "the Brophy penny" scheme had been programmatically overcome. WAG knew exactly what it wanted: a loans-based sampling scheme with "annual payments to authors alone, from central government funds, in proportion to loans, with an additional payment on the Swedish model to cover public use of volumes held on library premises for reference."

Between 1972 and 1979 when PLR became law in Britain, there was increasing debate, most of it within the overlapping library, literary, and publishing worlds. WAG—always an ad hoc group with never more than one thousand members, and, in practical terms, the creature of the combined expenditure of energy and time of Maureen Duffy and Brigid Brophy and those they could call on regularly for particular kinds of help—was at the center of the campaign. Not all who wanted PLR and worked for it were WAG supporters, but it was the WAG program that won out over alternative schemes sponsored by more well-established groups, such as the Society of Authors; it also won out over a considerable number of publishers (but by no means all publishers) who were unable to support any PLR scheme that did not share PLR proceeds between them and authors; and it won out over those schemes reviewed and outlined for evaluation in 1972 by the Working Party appointed by the Minister of Education and Science to report on PLR and published for the government by Her Majesty's Stationery Office. The PLR law passed by Parliament did not give WAG all it wanted—its proposal for inclusion of reference-book use by patrons in libraries failed—but everything else WAG called for in its initial platform became law. British passage of PLR was in part the result of the campaign waged for it, but it was also the result of the way advances in technology eliminated what bothered librarians most about

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the plan. By the mid-to-late 1970s, many libraries in the United Kingdom checked out books by using "light pencil" systems where withdrawals are automatically recorded on electronic tape, which could be used or readily duplicated for PLR. Thus, the old argument—that PLR would radically reduce library service—evaporated. American libraries no less than English ones are equipped with "light pencil" or "Metrologic" systems, the same kind in basic design that shoppers in most supermarkets see every day at grocery checkout counters.

In the United Kingdom the Public Lending Right Act of 1979 defined the principles, the scope, the annually appropriated central fund, and the loan-based nature of the scheme. The enabling legislation followed in 1982. Once passed, PLR became "a legal right to intellectual property," as John W. Sumsion, its first Registrar, explained, and "most importantly—to the man in the street the idea of PLR came to seem fair and natural."

Writers in Britain who would receive PLR must fill out applications for each edition of their titles. Once a title and its editions qualify for PLR, permanent registration is achieved. Annual application for titles once registered is not required. For every new book published, however, or every new edition of a previously published title, authors must register that fact if they wish to receive PLR proceeds for it. Registration by edition—original hardback or paperback, reprint paperback, revision, large print, etc.—is simplified by the use of ISBN code numbers, the ubiquitous International Standard Book Number printed in all books in most countries since about 1970. For earlier books that qualify for PLR, the Registrar provides an equivalent.

After all the calculations for the first PLR year were made, the rate per public library loan was set at 1.02 pence. The first checks to authors were distributed in late February of 1984. Of the two million pounds (almost $3,000,000) budgeted, it cost £412,000 ($601,520) to set up the register and operate the system, which left £1,588,000 ($2,518,480) for distribution to writers whose books qualified for PLR. In future years, since costs to originate the system will not have to be repeated at the same level, the PLR proceeds per loan available for distribution to writers from the annual appropriation may be higher, but only, since PLR registrations probably will increase, if the annual Parliamentary appropriation increases.

For the first PLR year the average payment was £261 ($381.06). A total of 6,086 payments were made to individual authors. They broke down this way:

46	payments at the statutory maximum	£5,000 ($7,300)
81	payments between	£2,500 ($3,650) and £4,999 ($7,298.54)
247	payments between	£1,000 ($1,460) and £2,499 ($3,648.54)
318	payments between	£500 ($730) and £999 ($1,458.54)
1,516	payments between	£100 ($146) and £499 ($728.54)
3,878	payments between	£1 ($1.46) and £99 ($144.54)

Though the PLR office does not publicly identify those who receive PLR payments, the titles of their books, or how much they receive, the first annual PLR payday was a sufficiently hot item that reporters found many writers willing to disclose what they got. Barbara Cartland, the queen of romance, just missed the maximum, but Jeffrey Archer, who wrote *The Prodigal Daughter* and other best-sellers, was among the top forty-six, as was the science fiction writer Brian Aldiss. H. F. R. Keating, a prolific writer of detective fiction, earned £3,700; Fay Weldon, the novelist, and Antonia Fraser, the biographer and detective novelist, earned more than £2,000 each (Lady Antonia getting much more for her detectives than for her biographies). Robert Gittings, a distinguished biographer of Keats and Hardy, registered twenty of his books. Of these, six qualified for payment and he received £250. "I am not dissatisfied," he said. "The principle of PLR, even if it doesn't bring in much money, was worth fighting for." Eva Figes earned £200 from her twelve books. Michael Foot, the Labour politician and writer, earned about £120. Brigid Brophy earned £240 from fifty separate editions of twenty books she registered.

The top one hundred authors of the slightly more than six thousand who received the benefit of PLR cover quite a range of subjects.

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While, as expected, well-known adventure, crime, Western, and romance books scored heavily, there was a reasonable scoring of general non-fiction, "literary novels," and children's books. For specialists in religion, poetry, politics, drama, and, curiously, sex, the results showed that they earned very little. What seemed to please writers most were the payments they received on loans for books long out of print—books for which they no longer received royalties from their publishers but which readers continued to borrow from libraries.

V

If you look steadily at the first PLR proceeds for writers in the United Kingdom, they seem like pretty penny-ante stuff—small beer, indeed, and for too many, a mere tip. Has it been worth the struggle, all this argument and maneuvering to bring forth so small a mouse? British writers think so, and in my view, they are right. To secure the principle, many felt, has been worth the effort. Beyond the affirmation of the principle in law, the question remains whether applying it will make a sufficient difference in the working lives of American writers to make PLR in the United States appropriate and urgent—that is, whether it will buy enough new writing time for economically strapped writers to make it worthwhile. I think it will. If American PLR is put at a nickel per loan—the common daily rate in library fines for overdue books—American writers of modest income, whose books are in regular library circulation, might well receive a few thousand dollars each year. This is not an overwhelming figure, surely, but enough to buy a month or more of unencumbered writing time. To the hard-pressed writer, such time might be enough to map out a long-considered novel or non-fiction work, to write a short story or essay, or to pay for some much-needed and long-postponed research or necessary travel. The PLR money may seem meager, but in the economic lives of most American writers, it is serious additional income in thin and woefully stretched budgets.

The question at bottom comes down to whether the Congress will be willing to act for PLR on the power given to it in the Constitution. That power is "to promote the progress of science and useful arts, by securing for limited time to authors and inventors the exclusive rights to their respective writings and inventions"; or, some would argue, Congress might extend the "general welfare" language of the Constitution to include the work of writers as something imbued with the public interest. I believe Congress should act for PLR because I share two widely held convictions. The first is the familiar belief about the meaning of property rights (a meaning that makes it theft to use someone's property without a consideration mutually understood for such use); and the second is that what writers do in their work—no less than, say, what farmers do—is in the public interest.

The culture of books, no less than the products of agriculture, is worthy of national support. To be sure, there's always a question of priorities. Moreover, in the American system, priorities are never clear until politics sorts them out. The process is usually murky, but once ordered and ratified, the results—the land grant college system, the social security program, the federal highway and space programs, the agricultural price supports—become constituent parts of the American way of life. They are not all unarguable parts—we spent $60 million to support the price of domestic honey production in 1983, for example, and will probably spend close to $75 million in 1984, and figures from the Congressional Budget Office estimate the support will rise to $160 million from 1986 to 1989—but they are all constituent parts nonetheless. What is spent on more visible price support programs for the dairy industry, say, or for crops as different as cotton, rice, and tobacco, dwarfs what is spent in price supports for honey.

Special pleaders before Congress always promote their causes as matters of imperative public interest. Compared to honey and tobacco, funding for PLR will be Lilliputian. If put at five cents per library loan, with a maximum permissible annual total to individual writers of $10,000 (200,000 loans of all titles in all editions by the same writer), what most writers would get would be modest indeed. The question is whether the American people will stand for it, will embrace the justice of it. Writers and their friends don't know. Senator Charles McC. Mathias, Jr.,

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wants to find out. For many writers—W. Jackson Bate, K. C. Constantine, Malcolm Cowley, Henry A. Murray, Richard Rodriquez, May Sarton, Peter De Vries, and Philip Young are some of them—what the novelist Shirley Hazzard says about PLR is true.

> Indeed I do feel the absence of this civilized acknowledgment in the United States—not simply for myself but as a principle and as a rightful benefit to all authors. The lack of public lending right can be seen, I think, in context—not merely as a vacuum but as indicative of an attitude of government, and by extension of society, towards the articulate independence of literature. Conversely, the adoption of such a law as that operating in Britain and elsewhere would be expressive of a degree of maturity and enlightenment in this nation's processes, immeasurably outweighing the small public expense incurred.

And doubtless they would agree with what the historian and sociologist Robert Nisbet adds: "In vivid memory of what the incomparable Dr. Johnson told Boswell about writing, money, and blockheads, I want to say that enactment of PLR would be long-overdue recognition of national indebtedness to writers and a sign of elevation of the national mind. I support it wholeheartedly."

Among writers, support for PLR is sometimes tinctured, for reasons Miss Hazzard and Mr. Nisbet suggest, by a conviction more or less stable, that PLR will never become law in the United States. No one who endorses PLR is more sour on its chances than Gore Vidal, who says that "since all civilized countries of the West have a Public Lending Right Law, it is only natural that the United States does not—and will not, ever. Our national bibliophobia is about as old as Dutch elm disease; and as lethal."

VI

Though there has been a scattering of Blimpish grumble, PLR is an accepted fact of life in Great Britain. The question is whether PLR can cross the Atlantic as well as it has crossed the Channel from Europe to the United Kingdom. To date, its American history has been thin. In 1973 Ogden Reid, then a Democratic congressman from Westchester County, New York, tried to get authorization for a commission appointed by Congress to study the case for an American PLR. His bill, HR 4850, in the Ninety-third Congress, failed in committee, perhaps because whatever concern Congress could muster then for writers was concentrated on the quite pressing problems of copyright reform. A considerable number of American organizations professionally concerned with writers and their work, with the exception of the Author's Guild, were unaware of PLR as late as 1980. So, too, were the venues of literary journalism. There was some scholarship, notably a special PLR issue of *Library Trends* in the spring of 1981 and a prizewinning essay in 1980, "A Look at the Public Lending Right," by Ernest A. Seemann of the University of Miami Law School, which surveyed the nature, history, and legal status of PLR where it existed. But, save for some dim echoes of the campaign for PLR in England, nothing of value on PLR happened in the United States until September 29, 1983, when the Center for the Book at the Library of Congress sponsored a forum on PLR. Many of those who contributed to the *Library Trends* PLR issue attended. Robert Caro, the biographer of Robert Moses and Lyndon Johnson and former president of the Author's Guild, and Anne Edwards, its current president, read statements in support of what Ogden Reid had asked for in 1973. They were seconded by the historian Barbara Tuchman, another former president of the Guild.

Representation at the forum was fairly broad—legal and governmental for the most part—and its speakers included John W. Sumsion, the PLR Registrar from Great Britain, who was the only one attending the forum with actual experience of PLR. The forum was meant to be an informational meeting. It was not designed to take a position on PLR, and it did not. Most significant about the forum was that it was held under the auspices of the Library of Congress and that Daniel J. Boorstin, the Librarian of Congress, attended. To me the forum had special value because it implied two things: that PLR is an idea ready for the national agenda and that it cannot succeed without the assent, if not the advocacy, of librarians. Such advocacy will not be easy to get. Robert Wedgeworth, executive director of the American Library Association, for exam-

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ple, is sympathetic to the plight of authors, but he made it plain, when pressed, that he was "ambivalent" about PLR. The Association of American Publishers (AAP), while represented, understandably took no position. In due course, the AAP will have to take a position. The brouhaha that will precede whatever position it takes is as inevitable as the dissents that will follow hard upon it.

By far the most important development at the forum was the announcement by Ralph Oman, legislative aide to Senator Mathias, Republican from Maryland, that the Senator, who is a member of the Judiciary Committee and chairman of its Subcommittee on Patents, Copyrights, and Trademarks, would introduce a bill calling for the establishment of a national commission to study the merits of an American PLR. Several weeks later, on November 18, 1983, Senator Mathias introduced S. 2192, a "bill to establish a commission to study and make recommendations on the desirability and feasibility of compensating authors for the lending of their books by lending institutions."

> I have always thought [he said on the floor of the Senate] that Congress, by protecting the rights of authors, achieved two valuable goals—the continued creation of high quality work, and the widest possible dissemination of these works to the reading public. I think the public lending right idea is ripe for a review on the basis of these two goals.
>
> The Commission [he went on] would examine the question raised by this idea: Would a public lending right system be in the public interest? Would it encourage authors to write? Could it be financed without burdening our libraries or without discouraging reading?
>
> The Commission would be made up of librarians, authors, publishers and representatives of the general reading public. The report of the Commission will give Congress guidance as it carries out its constitutional mandate [Article 1, Section 8] to encourage authorship and promote the progress of science and useful arts.

Senator Mathias's bill expired with the Ninety-eighth Congress but will be reintroduced in 1985 in the Ninety-ninth. Once passed, public hearings will follow.

For the first time, within the only institution capable of actual redress of the grievance alleged, it is fair to expect that there will be a thorough review of PLR. Legislative recommendations, if not inevitable, are probable. Chance of eventual passage into law depends on how large a constituency can be found for PLR. I do not know what the odds are, or what the outcome will be; nobody does; but sentiment is rising for PLR. It is much too early to tell whether it is a sentiment that will flourish and prevail or whether it is one that will dwindle and fade and so add PLR to the list of American lost causes.

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The Rise of Christianity

W. H. C. FREND

Why attempt a lengthy work on the early centuries of Christianity? With considerable uncertainty whether mankind will reach the end of the present century without blowing itself and the planet to pieces, are there not more urgent tasks for a scholar? The short answer is, of course, that most intellectual challenges, especially those designed to widen the horizons of knowledge, are worthwhile, and the more exacting, the more inviting. Mount Everest is there to be climbed. The second, however, is that, in a generation where the search for "roots" has become a passionate quest and where ill-defined but deeply felt religious antagonisms are by no means dead, even among those who call themselves Christians (witness the Croat massacres of the Orthodox Serbs in 1941 or the Ulster situation today), it is worthwhile to research the beginning and early evolution of Christianity. One needs to ask how and why divisions that have caused so much anguish, to say nothing of the cost in lives, originated.

It is now forty years since Hans Lietzmann, under whom I had the privilege of studying in Berlin in 1938, published the final volume of his *Geschichte der alten Kirche*. Lietzmann had begun as a New Testament scholar, like most Continental historians of the early Church. He had widened the scope of his scholarship, first to the study of the history of early liturgies, then to Greco-Roman religion, and finally to archaeology. Could it be proved that Peter and Paul were ever in Rome? The excavations beneath the Vatican carried out by Professor Enrico Josi from 1942 onward would have aroused Lietzmann's intense interest. When I left him in the spring of 1938 for North Africa, his parting advice was that I should keep an eye out for evidence of a similar pattern of distribution for Berber remains (mainly inscriptions in the Libyan language) and Donatist churches in Algeria. The advice proved worth heeding.

Lietzmann had sought to document the two major developments that were taking place in the history of early Christianity—namely, the study of the development of Christian thought and doctrine and the development of Christianity as a social and even political movement. The one was a literary Patristic tradition and had been mainly the preserve of clergy of all major confessions, but the latter had been built up by laymen, archaeologists, and historians who, though far from anti-Christian, aimed at advancing research wherever this might lead.

Both traditions were heirs to the Renaissance and Reformation. What the Protestant Centuriators of Magdeburg had begun in the 1550s was continued in the Counter-Reformation by Carlo Borromeo and his colleagues, and in the seventeenth century by the Marists and Jesuits. Though biased toward a vindication of Roman Catholicism, their scholarship was immense, and no historian of early Christianity can withhold his gratitude to them. The lay-scholarly tradition, however, has had as long, if not longer, a pedigree. It was as early as 1475 that members of the Roman Academy descended the Catacomb of Peter and Marcellinus and declared their intention as *perscrutatores antiquitatis* (researchers of antiquity) to investigate the past for its own sake, thus making the earliest known claim to research Christian antiquity through archaeology.

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Generations of scholars followed in their footsteps, seeking more information about early Christian and Jewish communities from the Roman catacombs. It was only, however, in the nineteenth century that archaeology in general emerged from the collection of artistic treasures to the scientific assemblage and study of the material remains of the past. In that context, two parallel movements resulted in a harvest of material from the Mediterranean countries on which archaeological studies in early Christianity are still based.

The first was the progressive conquest and settlement of Algeria by the French from 1830 onward, followed two generations later, after the Congress of Berlin in 1878, by a general scramble of the major European powers to gain spheres of economic and cultural influence in the decaying Turkish empire, particularly in Asia Minor. The second was the development of biblical criticism throughout the nineteenth century. In Algeria, the French were confronted by unparalleled quantities of remains from the Roman and Byzantine periods. Both there and in Asia Minor, areas that had seen centuries of settled communities had simply been abandoned in the face of progressive domination by nomadic peoples. Apart from depredations by the weather and sometimes by earthquakes, remains of cities and villages stood as intact as when the last inhabitants had left or met their end. In Asia Minor, where European powers sought to establish archaeological missions with the same enthusiasm as consulate offices and post offices, the scene was the same. Greco-Roman cities, churches, and monasteries stood where they had been abandoned. Even in the 1950s, the visitor to an ancient site could find a marble statue lying on the ground, or even a burial inscription or Roman milestone in the bus station of a town, as I did at Afyon in east-central Turkey. In these important areas for early Christian history, vast fields of discovery opened up, and remain so today.

Access to those sites, however, would not have been much benefit to historians of early Christianity had it not been accompanied by changing attitudes toward the subject itself. The rising disciplines of Egyptology and Assyriology had from the 1840s on provided new dimensions for the study of the Old Testament. Twenty years later, the emergence of the new school of New Testament critics in Germany, France, and Britain spurred on scholars to attempt to prove or disprove the truth of the New Testament narratives by on-the-spot investigations. The work of W. M. Ramsay in Anatolia during the 1880s started as an effort on his part to prove the reliability of Saint Luke, in that the Pauline cities mentioned in Acts 13–18 were indeed situated in the Roman province of Galatia and that the missionary journey of Paul and Barnabas could be authenticated on the ground.

The work of these pioneers—in Asia Minor by Ramsey and his disciples and in North Africa by Stephane Gsell—cannot be overestimated. Not only was a great amount of evidence bearing on the early development of Christianity in those areas preserved for study, but this new material opened up possibilities for understanding the evolution of the Church as a social movement. In particular, inscriptions and other remains enabled the non-orthodox Christian movements, notably the Montanists in Phrygia and the Donatists in Numidia (eastern Algeria) to be researched. For the first time, these long-lost schisms could speak for themselves. It was my good fortune to come in at the very end of this first wave of archaeological research. At Oxford I had studied Modern History but from early years had had an enthusiasm for archaeology, and in 1934 I had worked while still at school with Mortimer Wheeler on the Romano-Celtic temple site at Maiden Castle in Dorset. I had been impressed by the finds made there that showed that the temple that stood in full view of the Roman city of Durnovaria (Dorchester) could not have been built before A.D. 364 and had been repaired after A.D. 378—that is, at a time when Christianity was the official religion of the Roman Empire. At Oxford, the "Special Subject" to be studied in the first or earliest period of the Modern History School (284–604) was "St. Augustine," and this introduced me to the saint's opponents, the Donatists.

In 1937 the Craven Travelling Fellowship enabled me to go successively to Paris, Berlin, and North Africa and there to participate in what proved to be the final period of French archaeological survey work and excavation on Romano-Berber sites in the Numidian countryside. There was no doubt from the sites one worked on that in the fourth century this part

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of Roman North Africa reflected a uniform rural culture. The villages formed part of the imperial estates. They were heavily populated and very numerous. But the characteristic buildings were not those of the Roman towns. They were entirely agricultural and consisted of the olive press—one to each family—the silo for storing grain, the barn, the fortified granary, and above all the chapel. Of the sixty or so separate village sites I visited in 1938 and 1939, not one had less than two churches and some as many as five or six. Moreover, these churches were all built on a single plan, basilican in shape, with a raised apse at the east end. In front of the apse would be a small square enclosure for the altar, and below this a stone slab guarding relics of martyrs housed in clay cooking pots, tightly sealed with hard, white plaster. Decoration on the walls was inspired by traditional native motifs taken from the art of the wood carver. Inscriptions sometimes gave the names of martyrs and the dates of their death, sometimes a snatch of biblical text, and sometimes the watchword of the Donatist church, *Deo laudes* (praise to God). This was Donatist Numidia, whose people had fought Augustine so long and bitterly. Patristic texts and archaeological discovery told the same story.

It was obvious then as it is now that the history of early Christianity could not be understood unless all types of evidence were brought in. The mute witness of the stones was not always the same as that of the Church Fathers whose works have survived through the volumes of Migne's *Patrologia Latina*. The Second World War, however, put an end not only to my own research but it would seem to all research on rural sites in eastern Algeria. Years afterward, in 1979, I found to my surprise that many of the photographs I had taken of agricultural remains and churches in the area were now unique. All else had been swept away in the war, its troubled aftermath, and the Algerian war of independence.

The postwar years have increased enormously the scope and range of discoveries relating to the early Church. The process has been aided by a public awareness, practically all over the world, of the value of antiquities as historical documents and the need to preserve them. One has only to mention here the accidental discovery of the first Dead Sea Scrolls by an Arab shepherd boy or the equally chance find of the Nag Hammadi Gnostic documents by peasants, who, while having little education, possessed the wit to realize that they might have something of interest to the local Copts. A generation before, both these finds might have ended their days on a charcoal fire, providing fine fuel for the pleasure of the village elders.

The evolution of this "world culture" interested in man, his history, and his antecedents has not passed unnoticed by governments. Since 1960 their support has made possible the creation of international teams specializing in salvage archaeology in areas such as the Nile Valley or Carthage, where the demands of the growth of population have endangered archaeological remains. The frescoes of Faras and the Christian manuscripts from Q'asr Ibrim rewarded the international endeavors to "Save Nubia," before the sites were engulfed by the rising water of Lake Nasser piling up behind the High Dam at Aswân.

My recent work is therefore to some extent the heir to these discoveries. I had the good fortune to take part in three seasons of work at Q'asr Ibrim and two, with the University of Michigan team, at Carthage. Since I started to write my recently published volume *The Rise of Christianity* in 1974, archaeology and its results have never been far from my mind. The early Christians (the Christians of the first two centuries) were much the same sort of people as the Jews of the Dispersion of their day. They were by no means representatives of oppressed classes. There were a few wealthy members, such as Marcion of Pontus and quite a number of what Irenaeus called "rich women"; there were men like Athenagoras (c. 177) or some of the confessors at Lyon who owned slaves; there were artisans and some slaves, such as the heroic Blandina of Lyon. They were not people from whom much fine writing would be expected. They wrote letters, homilies, gospels even, and some prophecies, like those included in the *Shepherd of Hermas* (c. 120), but it would be the turn of the fourth century before a historian arose, such as Eusebius of Caesarea, who could relate the history of the Christian movement for posterity. Thus, material remains, especially the paintings in the Roman catacombs and those from the church in the frontier city of Dura Europos, are essential for

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the understanding of the ideas of those who became Christian before Constantine's conversion.

My first aim has been to follow out the development of the Church from Judaism. Thus, I start not with Jesus' birth, but with the Maccabean era at about 140 B.C. What was the Jewish world like at that time? What were the aspirations of the millions of Jews who dwelt not only in Palestine, but in the length and breadth of the Mediterranean and across the Roman frontier eastward into Parthia? Babylon and Alexandria were Jewish cities as populous as Jerusalem itself. Judaism is revealed as the most vigorous religion in the Greco-Roman world, but through its vigor, it was riddled with sectarian strife. Already one can perceive controversy between those who accepted the monarchy, the Jerusalem Temple, and priesthood as God's representatives and those who looked back to an older tradition of Moses and the prophets. Then there would be no parallel in the Jewish communities in other cities to the educated Hellenistic Judaism of Alexandria. One can build up a picture of this enormously vital and vigorous movement that touched every part of the Mediterranean, ready to accept some new messianic direction, or else to burst at its seams. For the moment, the common bond of Judaism held these various groups together. It needed only the preaching of Jesus, as interpreted in the Jewish Dispersion communities by Paul, to rend the facade of unity and let each rival tradition find its new field of action under the banner of the Christian faith. Sectarian as well as normative Christianity was the heir to Judaism, and this fact was understood by the pagan opponents of the new faith at least from A.D. 170 onward.

If the early history of Christianity unfolded amid the fervent hopes and expectations of the Jewish people, Christianity advanced during the third century through its ability to adapt its ideas to those of many educated members of the Greco-Roman world. The long conflict with Platonism that reached a pitch of intensity on the eve of the Great Persecution, A.D. 303–312, left the Church in the Greek-speaking world with a legacy of Platonic ideas through which its own doctrines were to be expressed. The "Christian Platonists" of Alexandria, themselves the heirs to the Platonist Judaism of Philo of Alexandria, became the most powerful influence in molding the doctrines of the Church.

Down to c. 270 Christianity had been mainly an urban movement. This had given it its strength, for it inherited from Judaism a Mediterranean-wide network of communities among whom it could attract adherents. Uniform organization under bishops and other clergy, an authoritative sacred literature in the Jewish Scripture and the New Testament, a liturgy that expressed hopes for this world and the beyond, and a strict morality founded less, however, on the Gospel teaching of Jesus than on inter-Testamentary (c. 300 B.C.–first century A.D.) ethical teaching of Pharisaic Judaism made Christianity formidable. The Church almost alone among the non-official religions of the Greco-Roman world emerged from the economic crisis of the third century unscathed.

Urban communities, however, were identifiable to outsiders and vulnerable. The Church nearly suffered a mortal blow in the Decian persecution of 250, when the overwhelming majority of the inhabitants of the Roman Empire sacrificed to the Roman gods as the protectors of the empire, regardless of what the Christian leaders might say or do. As the century advanced, so did the Church's mission into the countryside. While the established urban Christian communities were becoming increasingly integrated into the Roman Empire and its life and institutions, the new rural Christians in Egypt, North Africa, and parts of Asia Minor and Syria took the New Testament and its teaching more literally. They rejected any compromise with the world. They hoped that Christianity would improve their lot, and rallied to it as an alternative society to that of the Greco-Roman world. The strength of rural Christianity, especially in Egypt, foredoomed the Great Persecution unleashed in 303 by Diocletian and his colleagues to failure.

Constantine witnessed this failure. The religious revolution that he guided between 312 and 325 involved the displacement of the "immortal gods of Rome," protectors of Rome since its foundation, by the Christian God. By that time, however, the incipient doctrinal traditions in the great Christian centers of Rome, Alexandria, Antioch, and Carthage had begun to diverge. There were now added the differences of interpretation of the faith be-

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tween urban and rural Christians, and between Greek Christians educated in the philosophy of Plato and his successors and the Latin Christians more beholden to Jewish rabbinic models to whom pagan teaching and pagan society were to be rejected as "idolatry."

The Church was never destined to be united. In the last two parts of my book *The Rise of Christianity,* I trace the development of the conflicting traditions that composed the body of Christians from the fourth to the sixth century. One passes the milestones in the West, the careers of Ambrose, Jerome, and Augustine; one witnesses the growth of the ascetic movement that at the very moment of the Germanic barbarian invasions deprived the empire there of the leadership and will necessary to survive the crisis. Gibbon's attribution of the fall of the Roman Empire in the West to "Christianity and barbarism" was not far short of the mark if one interprets Christianity in the light of the dominance of the ascetic ideal from c. 375 onward. In the East, there are the great theological controversies: Arianism, followed by the Christological dispute. In the latter, rival theological traditions represented by those of Alexandria and Antioch confronted each other. The Council of Chalcedon in 451 was a magisterial effort at conciliation of these traditions, together with the solution of the growing problem of ecclesiastical precedence between the Old Rome of the popes and the New Rome on the Bosphorus of the emperor. Humanly speaking, Chalcedon came as near to achieving success as any other great conference aimed at solving worldwide issues. That it failed was no discredit to the emperor, Marcian, Pope Leo, and the representatives of the conflicting theological schools. Gradually, however, through the sixth century, underlying divisions in Christendom began to take permanent shape. Further efforts by Justinian accompanying his conquests in the West came to nothing. By 600 the major traditions of the Latin Church dominated by the Papacy, and in the East the orthodox Chalcedonian Church of Constantinople, the Monophysites (that is, those who believed that Christ was of One Nature, and that divine), and the Nestorians, had solidified. Each dominated a particular area and was identified with popular religious feelings. These traditions of Christianity in one form or another have survived to our own day.

The Rise of Christianity is lengthy, inevitably, because religious movements of thought and action by individuals, and individual lives have to be recorded. This is something that surveys cannot achieve. It is not, however, an exhaustive history like those by B. J. Kidd, or by Louis Duchesne of the early years of the century, nor a compendium, such as the multivolume *Histoire générale des l'Eglises Chrétienne* edited from the 1930s onward by A. Fliche and V. Martin. My book is an attempt to answer some historical questions relevant to the development of early Christianity. It is a historical rather than a theological study, though every aspect of the story that I believe valid as evidence has been included. It is also an effort at salvage. This may seem extraordinary in an age that has seen the massive increase in material available for an understanding of early Christianity. The work of Patristic scholars, too, has been reinforced by new discoveries, such as the Divjak documents (thirty new letters by St. Augustine), and by interest that classicists have been showing increasingly in the study of early Christianity as an essential part of their study of the Greco-Roman world. *The Christians as the Romans Saw Them,* by R. L. Wilken of Notre Dame University, is only the latest of a series of distinguished works on the early Church by classical scholars.

There is, however, a less hopeful side to the picture. Greek and Latin, essential for further research in the enormous literature of the early Christian Fathers, are dying subjects in schools and universities throughout the world. The lack of these skills cannot be replaced wholly by those of the archaeologist. The two must be combined if teaching and writing in this field are to be effective. This, however, means in many places crossing cherished faculty or departmental boundaries. In an era of high interest rates, and consequent financial stringencies in the universities, each looks after its own patch. The innovator, if he is a generalist rather than a specialist, can find himself outmanuevered in the pursuit of funds and squeezed out. As I write, my own chair, founded in Glasgow University in 1715 in the Department of Ecclesiastical History, and even the subject itself, has gone under, sunk like the *Titanic,* in the name of "academic restructuring." No more significant ex-

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ample of the awesome character of administrative power and the relative weakness of the scholar's and teacher's position need be quoted. All over the Western world, the same lights are becoming dimmed from the same causes.

The cause, therefore, of early Christianity as a historical subject is not too bright. Not that it will fall into oblivion. The harvest of material is too great and so, too, the interest it arouses among ordinary people. It could, however, relapse into separate disciplines: that of the ancient historian, that of the Patristic scholar, or even that of the archaeologist. As matters stand in British universities, contacts between these can be minimal. Preserves can be guarded jealously and studies may become meticulous to the point of pedantry. It is to link these disciplines together and direct them toward understanding one of the roots of much of mankind's religious and social history in all its varieties that I have worked these last thirty years in the field of early Christian history.

The Dead Pigeon

JOHN STONE

Once in Venice, in St. Mark's, I stopped
to watch a child, a girl of two or three,
bending to study a pigeon that had dropped
dead as a duck in that pure certainty.

I think now of the other death in Venice—
of Aschenbach not rising from his chair,
of gondolas and their enduring menace,
and of the child, her wonderment and stare.

Death divides us all to shape and shadow—
pigeons, children, old men on the beach.
Those left must learn the language of the widow
to speak to those who move just out of reach.

Two have made it back, according to Word.
Neither one was Aschenbach—or the bird.

JOHN STONE is a practicing physician and teaches at Emory University. This poem is from a sequence entitled "The Pigeon Sonnets," which will be included in his third book of poems, *Renaming the Streets*, to be published by Louisiana State University Press in late 1985.

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The One-Year-Old Lemon Tree

W. S. Di Piero

Its small celestial reach stops
  where the counterweight, the first
    tough green fruit, pulls earthward
and returns the brazen, almost rank perfume
of blossoms now six months gone.

The slurred odor of its leaves
  calls back that long evening's end:
    we shivered in the cool light
that a northerly sun bent against the world
into the hands of friends

who helped clear the outdoor supper's
  sharp debris—forks, tin plates,
    balled napkins and bone nests.
The lemon blossoms throbbed. The air
slowed with that young life,

the fragrance quickened in our veins
  the common, too surprising wish
    to hold, just then, another,
whoever stood nearest, whatever charm
would bind us to the lowering light.

Then someone said, "Let's eat the tree"—
  Tear apart the bole, raid the green heart,
    devour remembrance with one moment's
hunger and eat the nature of things.
Scraped plates, laughter, glasses refilled . . .

Our sweet anger urged and gathered us
  around the young tree's tub, made us
    tamp the wet soil and drink fast
the clear smell of unseen yellow fruit
in time we ourselves might never know.

W. S. DI PIERO teaches English at Stanford University. His most recent book of poems is *Early Light*.

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Remembering Thornton Wilder

ELDER OLSON

THE ENTHUSIAST: A LIFE OF THORNTON WILDER. *By Gilbert A. Harrison. Ticknor & Fields. $19.95.*

Biographers, like historians, undertake an apparently impossible task: that not merely of putting Humpty-Dumpty together again into a reasonable facsimile of his former self, but also of impelling him through a plausible reenactment of his past. No matter how many bits of shell have been gathered, no matter how carefully they have been reassembled, there will always be some who insist that important fragments have been left out, who will offer spurious fragments or ones from some quite different shell, or who will protest that the reconstruction does not truly resemble the original.

It would be difficult, however, to find fault with Gilbert Harrison's recent biography of Thornton Wilder. *The Enthusiast* is a sensitive, painstakingly researched, and ably written work, crammed with vivid and significant detail. Subsequent biographies may add to it but are not likely to supersede it, for Wilder the man is fully and accurately set before us—a person still somewhat mysterious, as most of us are, but made knowable insofar as he is likely to be known. Mr. Harrison is aware that biographical facts alone are mere mortuary measurements unless they are interpreted and vivified to make a portrait of a human being, and he has put that awareness to excellent use. By means of anecdotes, letters, journals, and other documents, he traces Wilder's life from birth to death; sets him in the context of his ancestry, his family, his friends and companions, and the various circles in which he moved; and he sees acutely what influences shaped Wilder both as man and writer, as well as the influence he had upon others. If one must carp, one might say that the chronology is not always made clear (a chronological table would certainly have been helpful), that the Chicago sets in which Wilder mingled are somewhat confused, and a few similarly minor matters; but these are as nothing compared with the good gift of the book.

This much said, I hope Mr. Harrison will pardon me if I add a bit or two that he could hardly be expected to know. I was not an intimate friend of Wilder's, but I was most certainly a friend, as he was a friend to me. I first met Wilder at a tea party given by Harriet Monroe in the office of *Poetry* magazine. Her invitation, handwritten as always on a blue postcard, read "To meet Mr. Thornton Wilder." I was eager, not so much to meet him, as to see him, for I had admired his first two novels. The party began curiously. Though Wilder was then in the first flush of his fame as the author of *The Bridge of San Luis Rey*, very few seemed to know what he looked like; most people had gathered around a tall, silver-haired, distinguished-looking gentleman, possibly supposing (as I did) that he was the guest of honor. Not being much of a lion hunter, I went over to a solitary man in a somewhat rumpled gray suit, who was peering intently at the framed photographs of poets filling every available space of wall. He turned to me, quick and alert, breaking into a warm smile as though he were greeting an old friend, and we talked for quite awhile about the poets and their photographs before we introduced ourselves. I still cannot understand how he could have been left thus to himself; perhaps he had arrived with a crowd while Harriet and the other *Poetry* people

ELDER OLSON is Distinguished Service Professor Emeritus of English at the University of Chicago. His latest books are *On Value Judgments in the Arts and Other Essays* and *Last Poems*.

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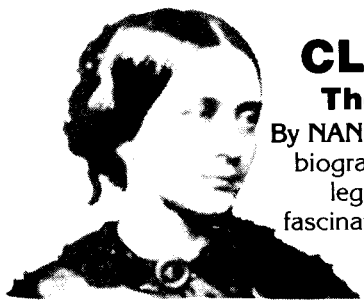
SUMMER HIGHLIGHTS



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were busy with the refreshments. Be all that what it may, at some point in the party Harriet, as usual, asked the poets present to read their latest work. I have forgotten what I read, but afterward Wilder came up to me and said quietly, "Your hand is ready; cultivate your soul." I understood that by "hand" he meant technique; I am still uncertain how souls may be cultivated.

Over the years, we met off and on at various lunches, dinners, University of Chicago Poetry Club meetings (usually at Gladys Campbell's apartment). I remember especially being on my way to one dinner when I encountered Wilder nervously pacing back and forth near the house of our host. He hailed me and insisted I walk with him: "We're too early." We began a curious and doubtless comic-looking quick-march to and fro until, after glancing repeatedly at his watch, he said, "Now." We had to be precisely five minutes late. It was one more mark of his extreme—and odd—punctiliousness: we had to be *punctually* late. At all our meetings he would fire off the same three questions: "How are you?"—"What have you been writing?"—"What have you been reading?"

When I ran across him in Paris in 1931, he was staying at the Hotel Buckingham, and he invited me to dinner. I saw him again later that summer, though more briefly, in Salzburg, where Max Reinhardt was presenting, in medieval manner, his magnificent *Jedermann*, the Zweig version of the *Everyman* play. The most important result of these conversations, to me if to no one else, was that Wilder persuaded me to resume my university studies. On this he was vehemently insistent; I can still see him leaning earnestly forward over the dinner table, eyes gleaming behind his glasses, and admonitory forefinger lifted, words bubbling and sputtering out of him. He talked in sharp, rapid bursts, with frequent pauses; when he laughed, it was in a quick, sometimes startling series of explosive barks. Sometimes, even when he was merry, his face would suddenly darken, as though a cloud shadow were passing over it; it would look gaunt and strained; then it would as quickly return to its former animation. I often wondered what might have cast that momentary shadow.

When eventually I returned to the University of Chicago, Wilder was still teaching there, and I took two of his courses. The first was a yearlong lecture course called something like "Masterpieces of Western Literature"; we read Homer, the Greek tragedians, Dante, Chaucer, Cervantes, Shakespeare, Shaw, and O'Neill's *Mourning Becomes Electra* (this last for comparison with the *Oresteia*). The lectures were held in Breasted Hall in the Oriental Institute; the class, unrestricted, was of about fifty persons, a very mixed lot, as varied in age as ability, ranging from serious students to the merely curious. Some, possibly, were only casual visitors. Lecturing, Wilder was never still; he paced energetically back and forth, occasionally stopping to peer at his notes on the lectern, now retreating, now advancing dangerously to the very edge of the stage to emphasize a point (again with raised forefinger, like a prophet in a Bible picture).

His method was simple: ignoring questions of technique or form, he would pick out the salient characteristics of the works he was teaching, illustrate them, and demonstrate their value. (His public lectures in Fullerton Hall at the Art Institute of Chicago followed precisely the same plan.) His only concern was to make his audience appreciate the classics, to feel the same reverence for them that he in fact felt, and he used every device to attain this end. He would point to a striking phrase: " 'the bird-killing winter,' he [Aeschylus] says—can't you just *see* 'em?" He would pounce upon metaphors and similes: "*Imagine* this—'each looked at us as in the evening men are wont to look at one another under a new moon; and towards us sharpened their vision, as an aged tailor does at the eye of his needle'—*imagine* it!" (Meanwhile he was miming the whole thing.) He declaimed speeches (I shall never forget his "Time hath, my lord, a wallet at his back"); he played all the parts in a dramatic scene (his Pandarus was a curious creature, wheedling, insinuating, lecherous, at once funny and sinister); he read brilliant, charming, or profound passages and commented upon them, sometimes changing words or rhythms to show how with such changes a passage powerful in the original now fell flat.

He had a "theory," as he called it, that "parody can sometimes, like caricatures, bring out characteristics that would otherwise go unsuspected"; consequently, we were of-

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ten urged to write parodies of the authors we were reading. Once, early in the course, this "theory" backfired. He was having difficulty convincing the class of the greatness of Aeschylus (no wonder, since they were reading the execrable translation of John Stuart Blackie—"Helen, Helen, phrenzied Helen / Many hearts of thee are telling"). He made the mistake of reading, by way of comparison, A. E. Housman's parody of Greek tragedy, which contains the following:

Eriphyla:
O, I am smitten with a hatchet's jaw;
And that in deed and not in word alone.
Chorus:
I thought I heard a sound within the house
Unlike the voice of one who jumps for joy.
Eri:
He splits my skull, not in a friendly way,
Once more; he purposes to kill me dead.
Cho:
I would not be reputed rash, but yet
I doubt if all be gay within the house.
Eri:
O! O! Another stroke! that makes the third.
He stabs me to the heart against my wish.
Cho:
If that be so, thy state of health is poor,
But thine arithmetic is quite correct.

The class was enthusiastic; the parody was clearly far superior to its model (they also preferred O'Neill to Aeschylus). Wilder's monkeylike grimace of discomfiture was very funny. Or, on later thought, *did* the trick backfire? Wilder could be very subtle. I recall that as the course went into the spring quarter, a very late and heavy snow began to fall, and student after student began to notice the flakes blowing past the windows and to murmur to one another about it. Wilder stopped lecturing, pointed vigorously at the window, and exclaimed, "*Snow!*" after which he immediately resumed his lecture. It struck me as extraordinary that a lecturer should call attention to the very cause of inattention and I asked him about it later. Eyes mischievous under bushy brows, he said, "To put an end to the thing at once—to discharge its claim upon them." Certainly the trick worked, and now that I think about it, nearly every class session involved tricks of one kind or another to keep the audience under his spell. No doubt about it, he was an extremely able and effective teacher—a polyglot, prodigiously well-read and well-informed, amiable and charming, so popular that his non-lecture classes had to be restricted by "screening." He is the only person I know who could make a lecture seem like a conversation, and, what is more, like an improvisation. But his lectures were no improvisations; once I saw him sitting on a bench on the Midway, his big loose-leaf notebook open on his lap; he seemed deep in thought, and I was passing by when he called out to me: "This is what we have to get through in the next hour," and he showed me page after page of closely written notes.

His courses in what would now be called "creative writing" but were then simply "advanced composition" were, as I have said, "screened." In them he read aloud some of the essays, poems, and stories submitted to him, invited class discussion, and commented himself. Pleasant though these sessions were, I found them disappointing, for he never dealt with structural, technical, or theoretical matters—things that have always been among my chief concerns. And a good deal of what he said, in or out of class, in print or viva voce, seemed to me exaggerated, simplistic, or flatly wrong. "Literature is the notation of the heart." "The novel is only a higher form of gossip." (This was as we were crossing Ellis Avenue.) "The box-set [the proscenium or 'picture-frame'] theater is out of date and cannot command belief." (I find in the preface to his *Three Plays* a lamentable confusion between dramaturgy, production, and staging; I should have thought it the product of mere impulse were it not that he repeated it again and again.) Questioned too closely about such remarks, he would become impatient and change the subject. I must confess that I thought little of him as a critic; though he had many remarkable insights, he clothed them chiefly in metaphor and simile. "In the *Paradiso,*" he told me, "Dante is painting white on white." I asked him, "What on earth does that mean?" He shrugged and was silent. I thought, too, (and therefore *said*) that his reverence for certain authors and persons (Gertrude Stein, for one) was excessive; I told him that, speaking in phrenological terms, he had an oversized Bump of Veneration. He laughed and retorted, "*Your* Bump is a Dent."

Whatever he said, it was never anything stupid; it was always something that excited

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discussion and argument. The geniality and affection that he radiated were so contagious that the composition class very nearly became a social group. When the term ended, Wilder proposed we celebrate with a party at a speakeasy; the idea (then, perhaps, a daring one) seemed to delight him. We met, indeed, at a speakeasy, but the party was a letdown, for some of us coarser souls at least; among the many things Wilder had ordered, the closest approach to alcohol was two kegs of near beer. On reflection, I think this deeply characteristic of him: a strong desire for the unconventional, held in check by his conventionality.

In the early period of his stay at the university, Wilder lived in the "visiting preacher's suite" at the top of Hitchcock Hall and, except when he was away or needed privacy, literally kept his door always open so that students might come in. Later, he moved to an apartment at 6020 Drexel Avenue—not for the sake of privacy but so that he might have a small "ship's piano" to practice on without disturbing students, for he was doing a good deal of ensemble playing—usually four-hand piano pieces—at the homes of friends. I was never present at such performances, and I never heard him play, but I understand that he was a very fair pianist.

We had, however, frequent conversations. Since he had little or no interest in theoretical questions, I learned to avoid these. Instead, I asked such things as, "Why does the same man, under different names, appear in *The Bridge* and *The Woman of Andros*?" (Answer: "to universalize the events—to show they aren't merely of one time.") "Why that strange, if beautiful, ending to *The Woman*?" ("Oh—I stole that from a short story by Joyce—only I changed his snow to my rain.") While our talks ranged over many subjects, a good part of these talks consisted of anecdotes, of which Wilder was always brimful. Thus he told me with joy of a party he had been to in New York, where Vladimir Horowitz and a violinist had suddenly begun to play the Kreutzer sonata, and told me later, sorrowfully, how Horowitz, then very ill, had said that he could never play again. He had other tales: how Hemingway, to win a bet, had brutally manipulated the beautiful and unstable poet Elinor Wylie, how the Lunts were so deeply in love that they became restless during even a momentary separation, how he (Wilder) had pulled Edna St. Vincent Millay in a rickshaw through the Chicago World's Fair, how he had met Peggy Hopkins Joyce—"Think of it! One of the world's last great courtesans!"—how he had dined with three notorious Chicago gangsters!—"very polite young men, otherwise just like you or me—better dressed, of course!" He once told me that nothing in life could surprise him; the fact is that almost everything surprised him. I have known only one other person—Katherine Anne Porter—so capable of finding the surprising in the most commonplace events and things. It was obvious that he constantly sought out those who were interesting or remarkable in any way, good or bad, not to "make connections," but out of general curiosity. "Connections," however, he did value, for he always advised me to make them for the sake of my poetic career, and urged me, for that and other reasons, to go to the MacDowell Colony—he would pay all my expenses. My repeated refusals angered him: "That's nothing but false pride—that's no virtue!" But I had never, since I was out of my teens, been interested in "making connections" or in a "poetic career"—I merely had to write poetry. And I would take money from no one, except as duly earned.

Others, however, were very willing to profit by his generosity. Frugal as he was with himself, he seemed to scatter about his money to any who asked or who merely looked as though they would like to ask. This one was a starving artist who made cutouts of gold paper and pasted them on black; this one was a novelist, or might be if she ever wrote; that one was a poet, or might be—he was having trouble with his studies—would I tutor him without charge, and let Wilder pay? (I tutored him without charging anyone. He never became a poet.) Mr. Harrison has much to say on this score (see pp. 134–35 et passim), but even his staggering list of Wilder's beneficences must be far from complete.

Financial assistance, though, was but a small part of Wilder's generosities; he also heartened and encouraged everyone—the deserving, the undeserving, the gifted, the hopelessly untalented. I remonstrated with him on one occasion: "Why the devil do you encourage a fellow like that? I can see him years from now, scribbling away in a basement, still unpublished, starving his wife and kids, all

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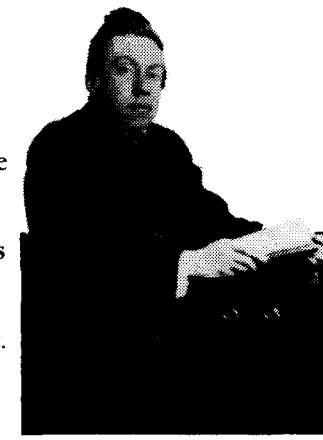

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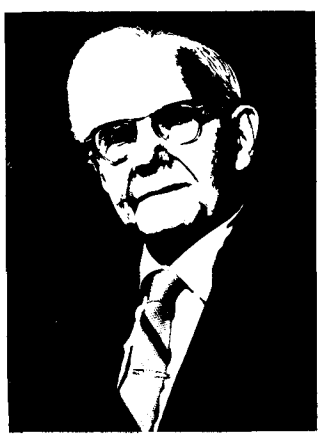

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because 'Thornton Wilder once encouraged me.' " Wilder replied mildly, "He will at least write better than he would if left unencouraged. Besides, how do *you* know what he may write? 'Canst thou look into the seeds of Time?' " Whatever he gave, money or other assistance, he gave without strings, with no thought of any return other than the happy and fruitful life of the recipient. People must be empowered to do the best they could. And doing good was the only way to correct, however slightly, the horrible imbalance of good and evil in the world.

Nevertheless, his selfless prodigality shocked me, for I thought it a form of injustice; and because of my frequent protests, Wilder mockingly dubbed me "the angry man." Irascible I certainly was; I was ill, overworked, nearly broke, and generally frustrated and unhappy, and no great spark was needed to set off an explosion. Yet Wilder himself could become angry, and three times he was very angry with me. The first was the time when I refused the earliest of his offers to send me to MacDowell (the anger dwindled with each repetition). The second was in 1934 when he invited me to attend Gertrude Stein's seminar at the university. He had made all the arrangements, including the careful screening of participants. I knew Stein's work and thought it worthless, as I still do, but I went anyway, to please him, since clearly he meant the invitation as an honor. I am not sure that there is such a thing as love at first sight, but there is certainly enmity at first sight; Stein and I met and hated each other at once. I listened to her driveling away about "All America is on wheels rolling rolling," how all punctuation ought to be reduced to the comma—or was it the period?—and similar profundities, and my gorge rose. When she called for—or rather demanded—questions at last, I asked her a few that were obviously intended to challenge whatever (if anything) she had said, and she became irate. Afterward Wilder sharply rebuked me for my behavior; with typical tact, I told him he was infatuated. "I don't believe this! I can't understand you!" he shouted. "She's—she's a very *Diotima!*" With a callow brutality I still regret, I retorted, "*Diotima!* What does that make *you—Socrates?*"

The third time was when I called on him at 6020 to offer my condolences on the death of his father. I had telephoned to ask if I might come, but when Wilder opened the door, he flew into a sudden fury. "What in Heaven's name are you doing, falling for that miserable algebraic-geometrico critical system of Crane's? A poet learning about poetry from a non-poet! Have you forgotten what you were put on earth for?" I was wholly bewildered by this onslaught. Wilder himself had recommended Ronald Crane to me; Crane had, as yet at least, no "system," and I had heard nothing from him that resembled algebra or geometry. As for learning from a "non-poet," yes, I had already learned a great deal. I did not reply. When Wilder's anger subsided, I made my condolences, very awkwardly, I fear, and left. This incident has always been inexplicable to me; it served only to remind me that Wilder, like the rest of us, had his darker side.

I saw him last in the flesh, either in 1938 or early 1939, when we met by chance in front of the University of Chicago's Quadrangle Club. After we had chatted awhile, I invited him to come to my apartment and meet my wife and new daughter. He was very gentle and kindly, as usual, but he seemed strangely somber and subdued. He stood a long time at the living room window with the baby in his arms, crooning almost inaudibly, then carefully returned her to her mother, sat and talked with us for an hour or so, and left. I do not know why I find the memory of this a melancholy one, but it is. I heard from him twice thereafter: once when he wrote, in friendly mockery, "Late for MacDowell!" (I was going at last) "Late for Broadway!" (I had just published a three-act play); and again when I forwarded to him an invitation to visit the University of the Philippines, to which he responded that he was seventy years old, taking cobalt treatments, and in no condition to teach anywhere.

James Atlas, in an amazingly inept and mean-spirited review of Mr. Harrison's book in the *New York Times Book Review* of November 6, 1983, tries his poor best to denigrate Wilder the man and all his works, and gives the biographer a few smart raps over the knuckles as well. *Our Town,* Mr. Atlas tells us, is "virtually unreadable now." (By whom? By the illiterate? By the spiritually illiterate?) *The Bridge of San Luis Rey,* says Mr. Atlas, is "the novel that made him famous (for reasons that elude even his biographer, who makes no claim for it)." The fact is that with characteris-

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tic modesty Mr. Harrison suppresses his own opinion and appends several pages of rave reviews by E. V. Lucas, V. Sackville-West, Arnold Bennett, Harry Hansen, and others. Except to quote Dwight Macdonald, who disliked *Our Town*, Mr. Atlas does not support his judgments (one can hardly blame him, for that might be very difficult); he is the self-appointed Angel of Judgment, and that is that. In place of evidence, he offers us such dubious profundities as, "The price of writing about everyone is that one generally winds up writing about no one." (*Everyman? Pilgrim's Progress? Finnegans Wake?* etc., etc.?) "Wilder frequently suffered long periods when he couldn't write at all; the suspicion that comes readily to mind is that he didn't have that much to say." This of course eliminates at a stroke most major writers, who have all had their dry periods. As for Mr. Harrison, he is "weak on interpretation" because he is slow to recognize that "Wilder was homosexual," though that is "obvious from the start." *Obvious?* Curious that, in this age, any supposedly educated person would think the question of importance, or of the least relevance to the quality of an artist; curious that I, moving in literary and university circles in a major city where rumors false and true multiply like bacteria and travel with the speed of light, never heard so much as a whisper. What makes it so "obvious"? Well, for one, he chaperoned some boys on a trip to Europe. (Let all scout masters and den mothers beware!) Mr. Atlas neglects to mention that Wilder did this at the insistence of the boys' parents and in the company of his mother and two of his sisters—no doubt the perfect arrangement for an orgy. But neither Mr. Harrison nor any other sensible person need trouble about such trash; it is enough to make one think that criticism was invented simply to afford people one more area in which to make asses of themselves.

What *was* Wilder, as a man? Certainly he was an extraordinary mixture of opposites, even of contrary forces. I have already mentioned his frugality with himself and his prodigal generosity to others, as well as the tug-of-war in him between the conventional and the unconventional, but there is much more. He was a missionary who often doubted the creeds that he preached and that had shaped him. There was much in him of the schoolmaster, but he was the eager pupil of Stein and Freud. He acted frequently upon impulse, but on reflection suffered over what impulse had led him to do or say. By nature affectionate and congenial, he shrank from intimacy. Wanting to know as much as possible about others, he was unwilling to be known. Frankness and reticence struggled within him. Eminently sociable, he was not often at ease in society. Thoroughly democratic, he believed in (and bowed before) an artistic and intellectual aristocracy. He was at once the naïf and the sophisticate. Wanting to be like everyone else, he also wanted fiercely to be himself. So complex a person resists any simple description.

If we talk about his works instead, since the man himself eludes us, two things must be addressed: the materials he used and his uses of them. No other writer I have known has ever so readily, so gladly and gratefully, confessed his indebtednesses and influences. "That's Mme. de Sévigné"—"That's Nestroy—do you know him? He's the Austrian Molière!" etc., etc., and sent me off to read them. He had the view that one might take whatever was useful, from life or from books (for books too were life, sometimes life at its most vivid and meaningful). But one could not simply *take*, one had to *transform* what was taken into something different—significantly different. Thus he chided me for admiring Romain Rolland's *Jean-Christophe*—"That's just another Tolstoyan novel—nothing interesting in *that!*" and for admiring, too, MacLeish's *Conquistador*—"But have you read Bernal Díaz?" (I hadn't, but promptly did; much as I enjoyed Díaz, reading him in no way lessened my appreciation of MacLeish.)

In 1942 Henry Morton Robinson and Joseph Campbell startled those who were prone to be easily startled by charging that *The Skin of Our Teeth* was a massive plagiarism from *Finnegans Wake*. Mr. Campbell, who has far better things to his credit, is apparently still proud of this discovery, as noted in the *New York Times Book Review* of December 18, 1983. But it is really small potatoes. Influence tracing is a legitimate area of scholarship and, skillfully done, can be illuminating; as a substitute for criticism, it is the first and usually only recourse of the lazy- and empty-minded (not that by any means I am putting these gentlemen in that class). Whatever Wilder

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owed to Joyce—and undoubtedly it was a great deal—the fact remains that *The Skin of Our Teeth* is not *like Finnegans Wake.* It is totally different in character and effect; what is more, it is not a novel but a play; and only those who are cognizant of the vast differences between the problems of the novelist and those of the dramatist can comprehend the full force of that distinction. Even a mere dramatization or adaptation of a narrative to stage or film, even a translation, is a separate work that must be considered as such.

The real question in such borrowings is, *How much* does the work resemble the original? Wilder tells us that *The Woman of Andros* is based in part upon the *Andria* of Terence, which Terence tells us is itself a conflation (*contaminatio*) of the *Perinthia* and the *Andria* of Menander. But how much does Wilder's novella resemble the Terentian play? The play, though called a comedy, is a romance; is the novella that? Wilder told me, when he gave me a copy, that *Heaven's My Destination* was "My *Don Quixote*"; the only resemblance between the mad knight and George Brush is that in each case high moral principles, misapplied, produce absurd consequences. The *Cento Nuptialis* of Ausonius is composed almost wholly of quotations from Virgil; it resembles no Virgilian work. *The Waste Land* is a collage of quotations, allusions, parodies, and pastiches; where is its prototype? Is it any less original because of its borrowings? (By the way, "originality" is a criterion very recently invoked; it does not emerge as important until the midpoint of the eighteenth century.)

But—to leave the question of Wilder's materials—what does he do with them? All of his characteristic works have certain things in common, and these, I think, must be noted and understood before one can properly read them. Wilder is a realist, but we must see what he means by *reality:* reality is the body of permanent truths underlying human action and situation; it is not verisimilitude. He is careful to be particular and circumstantial, but persons, places, times, and other circumstances are given merely for the sake of vividness and immediacy, for it is these that work primarily upon our emotions. His plots and characters in drama and fiction deal with the universal, not in Aristotle's sense of the necessary and probable in action and character, but in the sense that they are meant to set before us the eternal issues underlying human action and fortune. This is a reality in the sense that Platonic Ideas are real. As Elinor Wylie puts it, "The shapes of April buds / Outlive the phantom year"; Wilder presents us with "the phantom year" to disclose the perduring "shapes." As his plots develop, the particulars become transparencies through which we are made to see and reflect upon universals. The technique is of course one of abstraction: all the arts were striving to achieve it, with the exception of music, which has long ago achieved it. It is not surprising that Wilder was so enthusiastic about *Waiting for Godot;* in it all life is reduced to waiting and hoping. Waiting and hoping for what? Well, let us say, Godot.

The particulars, then, however sharply determined, are never really particulars (in *Pullman Car Hiawatha,* a field contains "51 gophers, 206 field mice, 6 snakes, and millions of bugs, insects, ants, and spiders") but, as I said, transparencies. We are given the exact latitude and longitude of Grovers Corners, New Hampshire (lat. 42 degrees 40 minutes, long. 70 degrees 37 minutes), but whether through my ineptitude or the inaccuracy of my maps, I find this somewhere in the Atlantic Ocean, roughly off Gloucester, Massachusetts. In fact, Grovers Corners is not Grovers Corners at all (in *Pullman Car* he places it in Ohio), nor is it even a town; it is Place, disguised as a small town.

Wilder himself puts it thus in the preface of *Three Plays:*

> *Our Town* is not offered as a picture of life in a New Hampshire village; or as a speculation about the conditions of life after death (that element I merely took from Dante's *Purgatory*). It is an attempt to find value above all price for the smallest events in our daily life. I have made the claim as preposterous as possible, for I have set the village against the largest dimensions of time and place. . . . Emily's joys and griefs, her algebra lessons and birthday presents—what are they when we consider all the billions of girls who have lived, who are living, and who will live? Each individual's assertion to an absolute reality can only be inner, very inner.

Yet if Wilder is seeking "absolute reality," he finds questions about it rather than answers; his "assertions," too, are "inner." *The*

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Bridge, for example, clearly poses the question of whether a catastrophe occurs by chance or by God's will—and like some of his other works, even that of whether a catastrophe is really a catastrophe. *Heaven's My Destination* asks, Is goodness of character sufficient to ensure proper action? Indeed, if we take seriously his remark that the novel "is my *Don Quixote*" (and we must, for there is other evidence to support it), is there not also the implication that the Christian ethic that guides George Brush is perhaps as outworn, as preposterous and mythic, as the chivalric romances that turn Quixote's head and direct his absurd actions? *The Eighth Day* raises the question, in the matter of John Ashley at least, of whether there is an ultimate justice in life.

Wilder's hinted answers are always optimistic ones, but tempered and qualified by irony. Brother Juniper, for holding what must be Wilder's own view of the catastrophe, is condemned by the Church and burnt; George Brush, though his moral principles lead him into one embarrassment after another, is still "the happiest of men"; justice is done at last, but John Ashley has no benefit from it. In every case the answer must be left uncertain because it *is* uncertain for mere humans; but what Wilder "preaches," if he preaches anything, is that there are Values, though we may misapprehend them and may err in our evaluations, and we must hope, even without ground for hope, because we must live, we must work, and life and work are impossible without hope. Habitual hope may become faith; but hope can also sustain us when faith itself weakens. When I complained to him that *Our Town* saw life only through rose-colored glasses, he laughed and said that the view through them was as valid as any through a darker tint. "What is your own view, then?" he asked me. I told him that it was one of a shallow German optimism based on a profound Norwegian pessimism (I am of German-Norwegian stock). He laughed again and said, "Never was anything so shaky built on so solid a foundation." But he was right to this extent: there is as much evidence for his view as for that, say, of the Absurdists.

Was he a great writer? He himself would have protested, and did protest. A minor one? A very minor one? We may leave such matters to posterity; for whether or not there is an ultimate justice in life itself, there is perhaps more justice in the judgments of posterity than in anything else. What Wilder certainly was, was a good man—a very good man. I can think of no important virtue that he lacked. Several times he wrote, "Of all the forms of genius, goodness has the longest awkward age." True, possibly; but I think he should have added, "Yet it is also the highest form of genius." Among his many other talents, such genius he possessed beyond question.

Uncivil Tongue

THE NIGHTMARE YEARS, 1930–1940. Volume 2: TWENTIETH CENTURY JOURNEY: A MEMOIR OF A LIFE AND THE TIMES. *By William L. Shirer. Little, Brown. $22.50.*

Reviewed by VERNON YOUNG

When William L. Shirer's *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich* was published, more than one British reviewer, while extolling its author for the abundant data he had amassed, took exception to the disparaging nomenclature he had persistently employed. Instead of observing the amenities of objective historical narrative by contenting himself with the rank and title assumed by his protagonists—Reichsfuhrer Adolf Hitler, Reichsmarshall Göring, Reichsminister Goebbels—Shirer would as often refer to them with some such epithet as "the barbarian dictator," "the fat, bemedalled marshall," "the wily, glib, clubfooted minister of propaganda." In the present volume Shirer pursues the same custom, rising with it to an apex of zoological scorn when he sums up (or sums down?) the pathetic monsters who had disturbed the universe, as they appeared before the International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg (in November of 1945). Among others, he noted Arthur Seyss-Inquart, "the contemptible Austrian traitor"; Joachim von Ribbentrop, "an evil, pompous little ignoramus"; Alfred Rosenberg, the so-called philosopher of Third Reich policies, "this dull, confused but dangerous Balt." Walther Funk, "who shouldered Dr. Schacht out of the presidency of the

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Reichsbank . . . still looks like a toad, coarse, greasy and shifty eyed," and Fritz Sauckel, "boss of slave labour in the Third Reich [was] a coarse and brutal man who looked like a pig." And so on.

I must say that, had I been face-to-face for five years with men such as these and with the global holocaust for which they were incredibly responsible, it would be next to impossible for me, in recording it all, to keep a civil tongue in my head. Be it to Shirer's everlasting credit that he has been unable to do so. Let us carve our heel marks deep. . . . Of course, history could not be written with any demonstrable analysis of its complexity if every historian insisted on his subjective opinion of the key figures in its enactment. This is a trap from which I see no way out. Time is on the side of the academic annalists who would have one preserve an attitude of evaluative discretion. History, the fruit of human passions, can only be studied dispassionately. Not until the movers and shakers have passed from living memory can one expect to study authentically the sources and results of their moving and shaking. For this reason we might learn to distrust all interpretations of the remote past. Who knows but that fifty years from now revisionist historians, refusing to speak ad hominem, may well be treating Hitler as the hero-victim of democratic imperialism.

Hence it is no part of my obligation to compare Shirer's reading of the nightmare years with those of, let's say, Hugh Trevor-Roper, A. J. P. Taylor, or Winston Churchill. What Shirer has written here is a personal memoir that is simultaneously a concise account of the worst decade known to European man since the Thirty Years War, seen from the witness point of a newspaper correspondent who became one of the first important international broadcasters. To this day explanations of *why* it all took place are by no means unanimous. Shirer depicts with unqualified clarity *how* it took place in the paranoid Germany that had already been transformed when he arrived. The psychopathic power of Hitler's personality combined with what Shirer in an earlier context called the fatality of the German national character is self-evidently a major clue to what took place in Germany in 1933. Thereafter, to explain Hitler's accelerating successes outside the Reich, speculation is king.

Over one lost opportunity, the crucial one, there can be no dispute. We know now (and the German High Command knew then) that if France had opposed the army of the Third Reich in the Rhineland (1936) with its own numerically superior forces, it could have swiftly crushed Hitler's battalions, and the Reich would have collapsed. Only after that colossal failure of nerve is it possible to claim that the subsequent crises—Czechoslovakia, Poland, and the stupendous defeat of France itself in 1940—were inevitable. Listen to Tolstoy (in the terminal essay of *War and Peace*): "Morally, the wielder of power appears to cause the event; physically it is those who submit to the power. But as the moral activity is inconceivable without the physical, the cause of the event is neither in the one nor in the other. . . . Power is the relation of a given person to other individuals in which the more this person expresses opinions, predictions and justifications of the collective action performed, the less is his participation in the action." Eventually, the Russian found so many contradictory arguments in the values attributed by historians to a single provenance that he settled for the existence of "a law of predetermination."

As persuasive as counsels of fatalism may be to us at an impersonal distance, they become unacceptable if we are convinced that in a given crisis someone who can be named shirked his individual responsibility. (I am haunted by a line from a French film: "For ourselves we ask mercy; for others, justice.") Shirer prods us with a sad reminder of what happened in 1940 to men who lived by the word, those keepers of the flame whom we now see celebrated without moderation every year in our literary quarterlies. When the doddering Marshall Pétain accepted a prostrate France, before the French army itself had surrendered, not a single man of letters publicly repudiated him. To the contrary.

Paul Claudel wrote an impassioned ode to Pétain (four years later he wrote an equally ardent one to Charles de Gaulle). François Mauriac, eminent member of the Académie Française, said of Pétain's speech of surrender: "It was not a man who spoke to us but something out of the profound depths of our history." Paul Valéry exulted that Pétain had offered himself "in order to maintain in the midst of disorder without example the unity,

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indeed the existence of the country." André Gide confided to his diary, while France was on its knees and fumbling, that he was personally prepared to accept a dictatorship, "which alone, I fear, can save us from decomposition." And in England, Alexis Saint-Léger (St. John Perse) refused to join Charles de Gaulle in broadcasting to the people of France appeals not to sign an armistice with the Germans. (André Malraux is of course absent from this list. I don't remember where he was at that hour, and Shirer seems to have been unaware of his existence.)

So shocking is it to rehearse this "treason of the clerks" that perhaps the short way of dismissal—to avoid the burning questions that are never adequately answered—is to recognize that, 95 percent of the time, political assertions from artists, from poets especially, are likely to be rubbish. Meanwhile, at the empirical level, Shirer's thrice-told tale of shame and recovery and the extinction of Europe is its own reward. Few qualified onlookers assigned to Armageddon were in the enviable, if heartbreaking position of witnessing, close up, as Shirer did, every outrage committed between 1934 and 1940, Europe's night of the long knives: Hitler's Nuremberg rallies; the Anschluss in Vienna; the betrayals at Munich by Neville Chamberlain and "the insufferable Georges Bonnet"; the directives from Berlin that loosed the blitzkrieg on Poland, and, in 1940, after Dunkirk, the Wehrmacht's sweeping offensive on a two-hundred-mile front, unopposed, "from the sea to the Argonne." During these years Shirer met, interviewed, or fraternized with Göring, Goebbels, Himmler, Hess, Ribbentrop, Heydrich, General Werner Freiherr von Fritsch, and William Joyce (the Irish defector known to the British wireless audience as "Lord Haw-Haw"). I wonder if today there is another man alive who can say that Hitler once brushed past him as he strode toward the platform. (That was in Danzig.)

Shirer makes light of his personal vicissitudes; perhaps age has withered them. At the outset of his European sojourn, he sustained a serious injury to his eye, and although he now minimizes its importance for him as *augenmensch*, it must have been at the time a considerable source of anguish. His wife's mishaps when, at the very hour of Anschluss in Vienna, she was having a baby, makes one's heart bleed, and Shirer's retailing of what he ate whenever he was in rationed Germany (that is, before Goebbels's Feed-the-Press policy) makes one's stomach quail. His generosity in giving credit to others for having expressed his perceptions with greater elegance or acuity is a refreshing note in the annals of authorial self-confidence.

Frustrated from the beginning in his attempts to write or to broadcast with the candor demanded by what he was daily seeing and hearing, Shirer resolved that when he was unable any longer to interpret his dispatches, even by innuendo, he would resign. By December 1940, his provisional independence came to an end. "The new instructions of both the military and political censors are that they cannot allow me to say anything which might create an unfavorable impression for Nazi Germany in the United States. [How could they have assumed that they had created a *favorable* impression at that date?] You cannot call the Nazis 'Nazis' or an invasion an 'invasion.' You are reduced to re-broadcasting the official communiqués, which are lies."

There are many one-volume histories of World War II in Europe more conducive to sophisticated reflection. Shirer faithfully reports what he knows to have been a tragedy, but the vocabulary of tragedy is beyond his reach. (His description of Germany devastated, as he saw it in 1945, is strangely without pathos.) Yet I can think of no other narrative that quite gives you the disturbing sensation of having lived in suspense throughout the calamity, not knowing how it was to end. Of necessity, Shirer has left out many anecdotes from his first version of this history, *Berlin Diary*. One he might have kept. I retell it here because it seems to me the consummate and macabre illustration of what totalitarianism can do to the human mind.

During the Battle of Britain, the mother of a German airman reported missing was told by the Luftwaffe authority that her son was to be presumed dead. Three days later she received eight letters from friends and acquaintances, assuring her that they had heard the weekly BBC broadcast of prisoners and that her son was safely incarcerated in England . . . whereupon the mother *denounced all eight* for listening to the BBC! (Wait for it!) . . . When Shirer included this in a broadcast prepared for the United States, the Nazi censor struck it

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out on the grounds that American listeners would not understand the heroism of the woman in denouncing her eight friends.

Victor Ego

VICTOR HUGO AND THE VISIONARY NOVEL. *By Victor Brombert. Harvard University Press. $20.*

Reviewed by EUGEN WEBER

Who was the greatest poet France has known? "Victor Hugo, alas!" answered the costive André Gide, troubled by the fact, yet overwhelmed like others by the "grand, terrible, immense" old man in whom Baudelaire (like Flaubert after him) recognized a force of nature.

Victor Brombert does not come to harp on tunes by now well known. He wants, rather, to show how modern the great poet's fiction was in its time and remains in ours: haunted, ambiguous, epic beyond familiar proportions, a marriage of poetic vision and ideology, of idealistic humanism and dark images of destructive humanity, ever agitating and never quite reconciling private aspirations and political ones.

A proper review of such a book as this would need another book; so, stipulate that the comments here advanced are partial and superficial. Brombert provides us with a conducted tour of Hugo the novelist. A glance, while driving by, at melodramatic juvenilia like *Han d'Islande* (1823) and *Bug-Jargal* (1825). Then a long edifying stop at a monument that most tours pass heedlessly, perhaps because so many anthologies reprint bits of it: *Le Dernier Jour d'un condamné* (1829). This is not really about the last day of a condemned man, but about his last weeks—even months—and represents an impassioned plea against capital punishment. It is not just about Hugo's enduring hatred of capital punishment, or about what his preface calls the sacredness of human life. It is the manifesto of a certain kind of modern sensibility. All the notions that we repeat today are here presented in the living agony of a personality that cannot be dismissed as simply fodder for the guillotine. The worlds of crime and punishment are related. The criminal, the judge, and the executioner are accomplices. Evil cannot be exorcised by courts and jails; it lives in the executioner, in the gibbet ("the only tree the Revolution won't uproot"), in the irrational bloodthirsty mob.

Hugo does not ask if it lives also in the condemned man, with whose sufferings the reader finds it hard not to identify. There is never any mention of the victim. What matters is the condemned man's long agony of dread, his suffering by anticipation and, one supposes, even more, that of the poet who agonizes with him. A sense of suffering, even of that of others, is a very modern luxury. Hugo is vastly self-indulgent, but robustly so. His sentiments are so inclusive that his indulgence includes all of humanity, and so do his revulsions.

Hugo never ceased to worry at the themes raised in this book, indited while still in his twenties, especially at the theme of death: of individuals, monuments, history, memory. . . . Brombert makes this grand necrophilia clear as the tour continues through *Notre Dame de Paris*, written in the heat of the immediate aftermath of the July Revolution of 1830. *Notre Dame* is about death and violence, human suffering, love and hate; it's also about compassion and redemption, and the brutish mob that needs them but seems so far removed from either. It is about Paris, about its stones; about books, whose more explicit and subversive message is destined to kill that which has been carved in stone; about human creativity thrusting a new Tower of Babel against the skies, more aggressive than the cathedral spires; about permanence and transformation. (I shall not list the remaining novels, but all have political overtones.)

Born in 1802, Victor Hugo was a child of the Revolution, of that age of revolutions from which he declared the nineteenth century to have sprung. He was also a citizen of the capital of revolution, and everything he wrote carried a strong awareness of the rising tide of paving stones that turned so easily into projectiles or into barricades. All his writings reek of history, yet all somehow reject it because it provides no meaning, only an endless unfold-

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ing of evil. Revolutions are inevitable, and yet they always fail: they can change everything except the human heart. But if history provides no insight, vision can. If history suggests no escape, imagination does. Politics must be converted into myth. Hence Hugo's novels are visionary, admiring those who, like Napoleon, act the "titanic coachman" of destiny, but preaching the nonbelligerent virtues; announcing revolution (a continuation of war by other means?) but preferably intellectual revolution, as prophets abolish heroes; attempting to accomplish on paper the transcendence or reconciliation that history and reality deny; prophesying (as Enjolras does atop his barricade in *Les Misérables*) humanity's liberating exit from the "forest of events," from what another novel describes as "the night of history," to an ideal ahistorical state where there will be "no more events" and, hence, presumably no more evil.

Already in *Bug-Jargal*, an adventure story set during the Haiti slave revolt of 1791, one major character taken from history had been depicted as monstrous, the fictional slave-hero as magnanimous. Only fiction could so transform reality. Only creative anachronism could overcome "the tragic sob of history." It cannot be denied that all this took a lot of vision, if that is the right word; especially since, as Brombert makes clear, Hugo knew well that the problem lay not in history only but in ourselves, in him, and in those characters that served as his alter egos, even those that least appear to resemble their creator.

This is so with the curious Canon Frollo, in *Notre Dame*, whose problems stem not from society, not even from God with whom he has lost contact, but from himself: the "abyss" Frollo dreads is within himself, for he is as empty as the sumptuous church that intellectual activity has turned into a hollow shell, "without candles, without voice."

It would be hard to say as much of Hugo, who strikes one more like a crackling, fiery Catherine Wheel; but Hugo also lived in fear of what he adored: Paris—too prone to bare its teeth; the people—given to senseless, cruel spasms; his own contradictions (Brombert points out that almost all Hugo's heroes are chaste, when Hugo's sex drive was almost as gigantic as his genius); the abyss within. The great problem, of course, was posed by revolution, which he acknowledged as a life-giving force and dreaded for its monstrous, destructive violence; and, more generally, by the difficulty of reconciling allegiance to the past and commitment to progress, a quandary that ever since has foreshadowed the similarly irresoluble contradictions of other intellectuals.

Hugo's last novel, *Quatre-vingt-treize* ("1793"), which he composed in the wake of the Paris Commune, was structured around a series of antitheses to pit catastrophe against compassion. It suggests, perhaps as the last refuge of a visionary, that violence and destruction are part of the divine scheme. Brombert does his best to hide that Hugo's insistence on antitheses was just a gigantic *fuite en avant:* a desperate attempt to introduce balance, harmony, reconciliation in the domain of strife, blood, and power.

Was Hugo himself convinced by his intellectual pirouettes? Brombert's analysis ends on a somewhat forlorn note that seems to echo the underlying pessimism of a thinker more profound than his popular image. To this may be added the very modern revelation that the bard of progress and ultimate salvation does not seem to have believed in the immortality even of the books he wrote. Instead, he had the vision to see that, should they vanish (and some sure take their time!), the image—"Ego Hugo"—that he built on them survives. It probably deserves to do so. So does this sensitive and learned book, which is appropriately dedicated to a couple of similarly sensitive and learned Hugo scholars whom the United States has sadly lost to Paris: Sheila and Jean Gaudon.

Papa Knows Best

THE SILENT WORLD OF DOCTOR AND PATIENT. *By Jay Katz. Free Press. $15.95.*

A LEG TO STAND ON. *By Oliver Sacks. Summit Books. $14.95.*

Reviewed by AMY L. WAX

Shortly after I finished reading Jay Katz's new book *The Silent World of Doctor and Patient,* I was called to see a young woman. She had visited four clinics in the previous six

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months and had undergone half a dozen tests. The history was classic: double vision that went away, hands that could not button buttons, blurry vision in one eye that vanished in a week, and now a foot that had suddenly gone numb. It all added up—age, sex, ethnic group—but the words "multiple sclerosis" had never been mentioned. My first impulse, conditioned by years of watching others in action, was to hold those words back as well. It was not without nervous hesitation that I overcame it. We had a long talk, that woman and I, in the emergency room. Why had I been so hesitant? Why hadn't that conversation taken place in other clinics many weeks ago? In his recent book, Jay Katz, a psychiatrist who teaches at Yale Law School, tries to answer these questions and pleads eloquently for a more open and equal relationship between doctor and patient.

Professor Katz's analysis of the multiple sources of Western medicine's tradition of silence begins with Hippocrates. Ancient Greek physicians recognized no duty to converse with or consult with patients. According to Hippocrates' canon, physicians were extended complete trust only on the condition that they never betray it; to put any interest before that of the patient was a violation of one of the central tenets of the Hippocratic code. Conversation with the patient, when it occurred, was directed toward offering large doses of hope and reassurance and, above all, inducing cooperation with cures that ranged from the agonizing to the nauseating. Extensive discussions on the nature of the disease and its treatment could only frighten and confuse the patient and impede a speedy recovery. For such indulgent practices, Hippocrates knew, Art is too long and Life too short.

The Hippocratic corpus maintained its authority virtually unchallenged for centuries. A succession of medieval and early modern medical ethicists elaborated on Hippocrates' ideal of benign paternalism without ever questioning its essential elements. A few Enlightenment physicians who believed that a dishonest atmosphere would impede medicine's growth as a rational science recommended greater candor, but their voices went largely unheeded.

Informed consent remained by definition a meaningless concept during the many hundreds of years that doctors knew little more than the people they treated. The absence of rudimentary knowledge and effective therapies forced the medical profession to mystify its trade in order to survive. The elaborate public relations strategy that supported this charlatanism occasionally worked surprisingly well. Throwing the weight of his authority behind an otiose pharmacopoeia of leeches and purgatives, the physician made full use of the powerful placebo effect.

After the turn of the twentieth century, patients were subjected in ever-increasing numbers to novel surgical techniques, large doses of radiation, and new medications. The risks of these procedures were either unknown or poorly understood and were rarely, if ever, communicated to patients. The victims of iatrogenic disaster turned to the court system for relief. Though individuals sometimes won their cases, judges frequently based their judgments on medical negligence rather than battery or the violation of the fundamental right to self-determination. The law defined negligence in terms of the prevailing standards of the local medical community, which, not surprisingly, accepted minimal disclosure as the norm. Legislation enacted by a number of states as recently as the 1970s continued the deferral to existing medical authority by establishing standards of disclosure less rigorous than those in the common law. The reluctance of lawmakers to second-guess medical colleagues prevented the development of a full theory of informed consent.

The recent marriage of medical practice to modern science has liberated medicine from the need to conceal its quackery, but physicians continue to justify their habit of paternalism with benevolent arguments. Patients are held to be frightened and irrational creatures who crave faith, hope, and reassurance from their all-wise and soothing caretakers. By telling the whole truth when half a truth will do, the physician risks violating an age-old standard of "good care and good custody." Why, after all, throw away a perfectly good placebo?

To those skeptical physicians who insist that to relinquish the traditional ethic is to cause the patient greater pain, Professor Katz replies that they misunderstand the nature of patients' suffering. The momentary optimism

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born of false reassurance can give way to despair and anger when projected results fail to materialize. Locked into a pattern of evasion, the physician who cannot deliver the goods withdraws all too often into an emotional coldness and then proceeds to treat the patient as ungrateful and demanding. As a psychoanalyst, Katz has often witnessed the anger of patients against physicians who keep them in a state of infantile dependence and ignorance. The resentment is compounded by the patients' willful complicity in this role-playing, which conflicts with their equally compelling need for independence and self-determination. The result is a "guerrilla war of non-compliance" that only reinforces the time-honored professional conviction that the patient cannot be trusted to know what's good for him.

One unintended product of a chronic policy of nondisclosure is that patients often feel abandoned by their physician just when their need for him is greatest. Katz quotes, with devastating effect, from Tolstoy's great short story "The Death of Ivan Ilych" to illustrate how lying interferes with Ilych's asking for those things that matter to him most during his final days:

> Apart from this lying, or because of it, what most tormented Ivan Ilych was that no one pitied him as he wished to be pitied. At certain moments after prolonged suffering he wished most of all (though he would have been ashamed to confess it) for someone to pity him as a sick child is pitied. He longed to be petted and comforted.

Katz recognizes that to some extent the impulse toward professional isolation grows naturally out of temperamental and human limitations: professional burn-out is the specter that constantly haunts doctors who would be unfailingly "present" for their patients. There is also the commonly-voiced criticism that the profession doesn't try hard enough to attract the kind of people who can communicate with their patients; but the problem may lie even deeper. The public and the profession agree that medicine needs scientific minds. What neither group acknowledges is that the proud Faustian compulsion required for success at the laboratory bench rarely blends gracefully with the qualities of modesty, compassion, and emotional flexibility that are needed at the bedside. Unfortunately,

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there is probably a limit to which these traits can be trained into coexistence, notwithstanding the wishful thinking of eminent medical educators.

Fearful of alienating its public, but convinced that a spiritual "feminization of medicine" will touch off a precipitous drop in status, the medical establishment is in something of an ideological quandary. Society deplores the heartlessness of the intensive care unit but still clamors for more technological wonders. Medical educators extol the virtues of clinical sensitivity but continue to dispense the lion's share of financial and academic awards to technical experts.

Ironically, the knowledge explosion that promised to secure for medicine an unassailable authority has threatened to undermine the basis for its esteem. Confusion, uncertainty, and controversy still surround vast areas of medical practice, contradicting a prevailing mythology that medical science is perfectible and fast approaching perfection. To simultaneously acknowledge the scientific confusion and maintain the time-honored image of decisive authority requires a delicate balancing act that few can execute. This difficulty is especially acute in treating cancer. Katz explores the history of breast cancer to illustrate this particular point. For nearly a century, thousands of women were presented with the assurance that a disfiguring operation was their only hope of cure. In fact, the scientific evidence for the superiority of radical mastectomy remains astonishingly thin. After much angry resistance, competing therapies are only now receiving serious attention.

According to Katz, it no longer makes sense to claim that a doctor can make a choice determined by the best interests of the patient since it is no longer clear where those best interests lie. A dizzying array of strategies and therapies has brought with it a new and intricate calculus of benefits and costs. The expanding possibility of doing good has brought with it a greater potential for doing harm as well. Even in routine practice, the physician runs the ever-increasing risk of violating the first Hippocratic law: *primum non nocere.*

Katz argues for a new decision-making alliance more finely tuned to the patient's needs. He casts his program as a psychotherapeutic model that seeks to make the unconscious conscious and that asks both parties, doctor and patient, to strive for self-knowledge and knowledge of the other. The doctor must confront his own prejudices as well as those of the patient; the patient must be willing to reveal his doubts and desires and to accept that the physician's choices are sometimes based on nothing more than feelings and irrational hunches.

Is Katz's conception workable? Enormous psychological forces favor the status quo. Katz quotes Richard Selzer, the surgeon-writer, to illustrate one source of this resistance:

> When I try to call the patient in on a consultation and say, "Which alternative would you prefer?" invariably the patient says, "What do you mean which alternative? I want you to tell me what to do. You're the doctor." The only unspoken word is daddy; I want you to tell me what to do, daddy. When a person is desperately ill or frightened, there is a certain kind of regression that makes you want to place yourself in someone's loving care.

The economic realities of medical practice militate against full, open discussion between patient and doctor. Sometimes there just isn't time; in too many hospitals informed consent has been reduced to a hasty recitation followed by a signature at the bottom of a boilerplate sheet. Even when it might be available, time costs money.

If there were world enough and time, some patients would still be impossible to reach. Large divisions of class, intelligence, and education can tax the understanding of the most sympathetic practitioner. The intelligent patient, however, poses an even greater threat to the doctor's self-image. The patient who demands ever more-sophisticated justification expects a degree of professional knowledge possessed only by a handful of scholars. For the business of tending the sick to proceed, a considerable amount of standard medical practice must be taken for granted by all but a few. It's hard not to fall back on that old standby, "Trust me."

Oliver Sacks is even less optimistic about breaking the silence surrounding illness. A distinguished neurologist with a far-ranging, restless mind, Sacks refuses to be bound by the profession's shibboleths. He has already written the unique *Awakenings*, a moving account of his work with Parkinsonian patients liberated into motion and humanity by

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the dramatic effects of L-dopa therapy. This very different, autobiographical tale, *A Leg to Stand On*, begins on a Norwegian mountainside. An exhilarating outing for Sacks turns into disaster as he runs in panic from a nasty bull implausibly grazing on the rocky terrain. Muscle and nerve are torn violently from their moorings, and Sacks narrowly escapes death.

Sacks's journey back to health forms the substance of his story. During a long and arduous recovery, he is tossed wildly between unpredictable extremes of emotion. Darkest confusion and hopelessness suddenly give way to moments of ecstatic gratitude. Black despair abruptly replaces blessed insight. Sacks thus conveys quite vividly the brittleness of feeling, the loss of control that accompany the experience of being thrown, without warning, into the world of the sick. His style evokes a religious confessional; in fact, Sacks is on a double pilgrimage into the mystical heart of his chosen profession's central conundrums as well as into the heart of his own soul.

In *A Leg to Stand On* Sacks sheds his doctorly persona. The transformation is complete and profoundly disturbing. The previously confident diagnostician is reduced to the alarm and confusion of the most benighted layman. Confined to white-walled, windowless rooms where day and night merge, Sacks is like some hopelessly isolated character caught in a Beckett novella. Though he does a great deal of wondering and asking, no one is listening. He can't seem to figure out what's happening to him.

Once he is beyond his perioperative haze, strange and unexpected sensations continue to assault his body and self. Sacks fails to diagnose his own classical neglect syndrome when a scotoma, or "hole," appears on one side of his visual field and parts of his body begin to subtract themselves out of his consciousness. It seems that the dreadful series of assaults on his physical integrity have left Sacks bereft of his former self—so much so that Sacks the doctor and Sacks the patient cannot communicate with one another.

While no doubt Sacks endured a frightening ordeal, he dramatizes to prove his point. What does the ability to recognize bizarre somatopsychic disturbances in others, the neurologist's skill, have to do with experiencing them oneself? Not enough, he concludes. Just as part of himself was temporarily miss-

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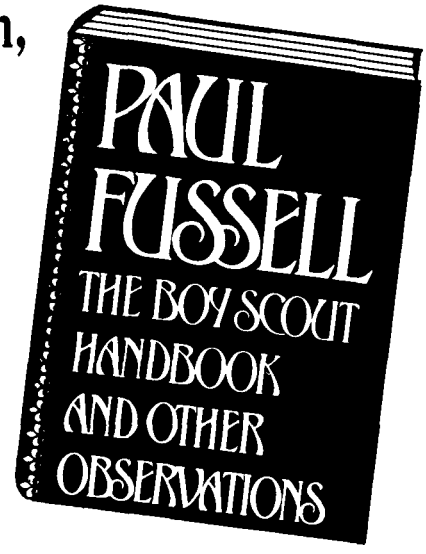

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ing (his active, functioning leg, and his conscious command of that leg), he realizes that a vital part of his professional understanding cannot be located. With his convalescence almost complete, Sacks sets out to rectify this great "hole" in his education. He returns to Henry Head's classic *Studies in Neurology*, but this time around it disappoints him. "As long as Head confines himself to the examination of mechanism and 'function,' something vital and extraordinary eludes his description." Working from the strict positivism of the British pioneers such as Hughlings Jackson and C. S. Sherrington, dreaming of a science to stand beside physics, Head "could not admit experiences in his work." In Head's voice Sacks hears the echo of the young registrar who abruptly silences his attempts to describe the raw feeling of his injured leg: "This is very vague and subjective—not the sort of thing we can be concerned with."

Sacks has stumbled onto another formidable beast, that central world-knot known as the mind-body problem; unfortunately he fails to address the problem directly. He seeks to pass beyond the mechanistic "puppetology" that holds sway over the brain sciences from neurology on down, but he does not seem interested in showing us exactly how the unity of psychology and neurology is possible. He skirts the difficult issue of how such an enterprise might overcome what the philosopher Thomas Nagel has called "the impossibility of including in a physical conception of the world the facts about what mental states are like for the creature having them."

Sacks seems to agree with Nagel that the only way to understand a creature is to become that creature. This tragic cleavage between subject and object imprisons the patient in his own ineffable suffering. No conversation can completely heal the rift. Sacks is more concerned with the moral weight of this insight than with its consequences for philosophy of science. "To be deaf to metaphysical implication is one thing, but to be deaf to anguish is another." For Sacks there is "an absolute and categorical difference between a doctor who knows and one who doesn't, and this knowing can only be obtained by a personal experience . . . by descending to the very depths of disease and dissolution." Since it is not for every physician to endure sickness unto death, Sacks seems to be offering a counsel of despair. His own story belies the extremity of his statements, for he did indeed seem to benefit immeasurably from the comfort and understanding he received from many kind people along the way.

Silence and abandonment are the themes that preoccupy both Sacks and Katz. Both agree that, try as we might, we can never completely know another person. Though neither author can show us exactly how to prove to the patient that he is not alone, each gives us compelling reasons to attempt this merciful feat.

The Sister Seven

ALMA MATER: DESIGN AND EXPERIENCE IN THE WOMEN'S COLLEGES FROM THEIR NINETEENTH-CENTURY BEGINNINGS TO THE 1930s. *By Helen L. Horowitz. Knopf. $25.*

Reviewed by MARY R. LEFKOWITZ

Thirty years ago, before anyone ever imagined that a woman might be able to attend Yale or Princeton, and Radcliffe was not fully integrated into Harvard, a bright girl from a good family, or an even brighter girl from a not-so-good family, prepared to go to one of the Sister Seven. Which of the group she chose depended on location, where her mother went, or sometimes even academic reputation. The more studious might choose Bryn Mawr, the more accomplished Radcliffe; the more socially inclined might go to Vassar, since it was near New York (though real New Yorkers would pick Barnard), or to Smith, since it was perceived to be near Yale; the well-rounded team players went to Wellesley. But strong loyalty to one's own institution did not preclude a lasting respect for graduates of the others. When visiting old school friends at one of the other campuses, one somehow found oneself in familiar surroundings. How seven different colleges, in different local-

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ities, founded for both religious and secular purposes, became interdependent is the subject of Helen Horowitz's study. But the book, unlike most institutional histories, does not focus on individuals or academic programs. Horowitz concentrates instead on the Sisters' architecture and landscaping, since these monuments provide the most immediately tangible representations of the changing notions about women's education in the minds of the Sisters' founders, trustees, and faculty.

Mary Lyon, the founder of Mt. Holyoke (1836), drew some part of her inspiration for her seminary's first building from the Hartford Retreat, the insane asylum where her sister was an inmate. An asylum is literally a place of safety, and Miss Lyon wished the young women at her seminary to be free to concentrate on both their studies and their devotions, without the interference of family responsibilities. Similarly, Vassar's Main (1861) was modeled not on Jefferson's Virginia, where the (men) students' rooms opened individually onto a central court, but on Charity Hospital in New York City. Main's four corners were aligned with the compass to give Vassar girls a practical lesson in geography.

The asylum pattern of a plain and ordered life was broken by Henry Durant, the founder of Wellesley. His College Hall (1876) was an elegant showpiece, sited on a prominent hill; its large atrium, covered by a skylight, housed rare trees; a reception room commemorated Elizabeth Barrett Browning's Italian sojourn; students ate off of (and soon broke) Wedgwood china. Smith College was more distinctive still; it instituted the use of cottages, which were small rooming houses, each with a female supervisor, for students. The cottages became so popular that the other colleges added them. The change in rooming patterns represented the greater independence desired not only by undergraduates but also by the female faculty who had lived among them.

Of the Sisters, only Bryn Mawr's first campus (1885) was modeled on an academic institution—that institution being Girton College in Cambridge, the first women's college in England. The main reading room of the Bryn Mawr library was a copy of the dining hall in Wadham College, Oxford. Academic standards at Bryn Mawr matched the architecture. Its great president, M. Carey Thomas, did not ask which women would best serve as surro-

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gate mothers for the girls, but which person might be the best teacher of Latin; as a result, many of the instructors were young men. Not surprisingly, the least distinguished academic buildings were put up by the Annex at Harvard (which took the name of seventeenth-century Harvard donor Anne Radcliffe only in 1893), and by Barnard (1896), both of which began as day schools and only in the twentieth century added residence halls and substantial academic buildings of their own.

Despite these differences in physical appearance, the Sisters from the start influenced each other. Wellesley, like Mt. Holyoke, began as a seminary, whose evangelical commitments later became an embarrassment to her proper Bostonian trustees. Bryn Mawr's president, Miss Thomas, was impressed by a service in the Wellesley chapel because the assembly was "all women, not a man's influence to be seen or felt." But now that the notion that women could be educated had been established, how best they might be educated became the issue; and the model chosen, inevitably, was the education of elite men. Bryn Mawr's demanding curriculum, with Greek, Latin, and mathematics, soon set the standard for all the others; Mt. Holyoke added classical and scientific courses and ceased to be a seminary in 1893. The more highly trained faculty that were now required demanded more independence for study and for travel, and also separate residences from the students; the students, meanwhile, had developed customs and traditions of their own and wanted more self-government. After Durant's luxurious College Hall was destroyed by fire in 1914, the Wellesley faculty insisted that the academic and residential buildings be separated, as at Bryn Mawr; ultimately this arrangement became universal.

Architecture also had an important indirect influence on the life and character of the undergraduates. For most of them, their college years provided the first opportunity to be almost exclusively in the company of other women. Strong bonds of friendship were created that lasted for a lifetime and formed the basis of the strong alumnae support each of the Sister Colleges has enjoyed. In some cases, the emotional ties were as intense and all-consuming as male-female love affairs, with younger girls having "smashes" on admirable and accomplished senior women. Women faculty members often lived in pairs, sometimes for the whole of their careers. Male educators had warned from the beginning of the "morbidity" of such relationships, but Horowitz makes it clear that in the social context before the First World War these strong friendships were natural enough, and that it is not important to inquire (even if we could find out) how often affection between women took a physical form.

It was only after the First World War that "crushes" between women on the male-female model became a source of embarrassment; but then in the twenties and thirties other distinctive features of the women's colleges began to be effaced. All-girl festivals were replaced by prom weekends for which men were imported. Students became more independent and mobile and accordingly more involved in the outside world. Graduates of the women's colleges no longer expected to choose between marriage and a career with celibacy; they wanted careers *and* marriage (usually in that order), or perhaps both in some vague combination. Vassar in 1924 offered a program of Euthenics—a glamorous Greek name for Home Economics—as a means of resolving the tension between women's aspirations and their lives.

By the middle of the century, and certainly by 1970, when the Ivy League schools began to admit women, the women's colleges seemed to many anachronistic. Their curricula (with the exception of their athletic programs) were indistinguishable from the coeducational liberal arts colleges. Vassar decided to admit men; so did Bennington and Sarah Lawrence—two of the women's colleges created in the twenties on the Seven Sister model. But the others, after considerable soul-searching, decided to remain women's colleges. Helen Horowitz's history helps explain why none has yet considered revising that decision.

Horowitz shows that, along with offering women the same education as men, the women's colleges have provided an environment in which women realize that they can arrange their lives by and for themselves. Modern transportation has made it easier to get on and off campuses, but utopias the Sister Colleges remain, whether they are within a grand remote park, like Wellesley, or on the edge of upper Broadway, like Barnard. The walls, the fine buildings, and the trees have served a

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symbolic as well as a practical purpose. Even though the Sisters no longer offer physical isolation, they provide a kind of political haven, where women can run their lives with the cooperation of, but without domination by, men, and where women have long been able to serve in the capacities to which coeducational institutions are slowly and often reluctantly admitting them. Like many other undergraduates in the fifties and sixties, I used to think that Wellesley's splendid landscape was irrelevant; its similarity to the ambience of Tennyson's *Princess* was noted a hundred years ago by M. Carey Thomas, who accordingly oriented her campus toward the town of Bryn Mawr. But Horowitz has shown that this irrelevance has a positive function, and that it and its many imitations on other campuses have sustained generations of temporary inhabitants, such as Katherine Lee Bates, author of the lyric "America the Beautiful," and her dear friend the economist Katherine Coman, and their dog and "surrogate child" Sigurd.

Alma Mater also offers, through parallels and contrasts, some illuminating observations about American elite education in general. Horowitz has a quick eye for the selfish purpose behind the dignified prose or the appealing architectural trimming. She shows how Sophia Smith resisted the local minister's suggestion that she leave her fortune to his alma mater Amherst; why the men trustees of Vassar ignored the basic needs of students and faculty when they created an exquisite art building (with delicate leaded windows lighting a white marble medieval tomb and a stairway with hand-carved railings that led nowhere) but only one studio, one lecture room, and a small library. Horowitz documents the fears that led faculty to demand that women be in their rooms by ten o'clock, while their male counterparts at Yale and Harvard were free to come, go, and assemble; similar thinking also led faculty to ban smoking for women because it symbolized sexual freedom. She shows that in the twenties even Barnard—which was founded by a Jew, Annie Nathan Meyer—tried to limit the entrance of Eastern European Jews because they "compared unfavorably in many instances with the bulk of undergraduates." The Sisters are worth knowing about not only because of what their graduates have achieved, but be-

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cause they insistently recall, by their continued existence, the great problems with which elite Americans have long been grappling: Can women assume the same roles as men and still be women? Can the disadvantaged and uncultured be assimilated into established society? That the Sisters continue to have a place in American society more than a hundred years after their founding is vivid testimony that these problems, for all the rhetoric of affirmative action, have yet to be resolved.

Valid Knowledge

JOSEPH SCALIGER: A STUDY IN THE HISTORY OF CLASSICAL SCHOLARSHIP. Volume 1. TEXTUAL CRITICISM AND EXEGESIS. *By Anthony Grafton. Oxford University Press.* $59.95.

Reviewed by PAUL OSKAR KRISTELLER

Joseph Justus Scaliger (1540–1609), son of the distinguished Italian physician, philosopher, and poet, Julius Caesar Scaliger, who had settled in France and become a French nobleman, has been celebrated ever since his own time as one of the greatest classical scholars of all times. Brilliant and learned, he inherited the best traditions of Renaissance scholarship, both Italian and French, made important contributions through his methods and results, and became one of the founders of the school of Leyden, which dominated the field for two centuries until the rise of modern philological and historical scholarship in Germany, England, and the other Western countries including the United States.

Scaliger was the subject of a competent monograph by Jakob Bernays in 1855, and he is now treated in an excellent new study by Anthony Grafton. Giving generous credit to his predecessor and referring to him for most biographical details (which he mentions but briefly in chapters 4 and 8), Grafton aims at what he calls an intellectual biography. He greatly adds to the documentation offered by Bernays, using new letters, manuscript sources, and annotated editions that have become available through his own efforts and those of other scholars. Above all, Grafton has a much broader conception, perspective, and knowledge of the history of scholarship and of Scaliger's place in it. The present volume covers the intellectual background and the earlier half of Scaliger's career up to 1573, emphasizing his contributions to the textual criticism and exegesis of many classical authors. A second volume, which is expected to appear in the near future, will cover Scaliger's later life, most of it spent as a professor at the University of Leyden, and his contributions to ancient history and chronology.

Grafton devotes three entire chapters (1–3) to the history of classical scholarship in the Renaissance, first in Italy and then in France, thus providing the reader with a broader context for Scaliger's own achievements. He stresses especially the merits of Angelo Poliziano (who has been much studied in recent years) and of Pietro Vettori in Italy, and of Adrien Turnèbe, Jean Dorat, and Jacques Cujas in France. (Basel, the great printing center of the period, was not a part of the French-speaking world, as stated on p. 80.) In praising Poliziano, Grafton seems to be less fair toward some of his predecessors and contemporaries, such as Lorenzo Valla (p. 9ff.), Perotti (who died in 1480, p. 17), and Marsilio Ficino (referring on p. 41 only to the "elegant nonsense of the Neo-Platonists," without considering his contributions to philosophy and to the understanding of Greek philosophy); and even Ermolao Barbaro and Erasmus do not receive the full treatment that their contributions would seem to deserve. I am afraid Scaliger had no interest in ancient philosophy or in patristic theology, and Grafton's own interests, though broad enough, do not comprise these subjects. (The scholar who resumed the study of classical philosophy and theology in the seventeenth century was not Scaliger, but Lucas Holstenius.)

Grafton devotes four more chapters (4–7) to Scaliger's philological contributions during the earlier half of his career, discussing in chronological order especially his work on Varro's *De lingua latina* (1565), on Festus's *De verborum significatione* (1575), on the poems of Catullus, Tibullus, and Propertius (1577), and on the astronomical and astrological poem of Manilius (1579). Grafton shows in

PAUL OSKAR KRISTELLER is the author of, most recently, *Renaissance Thought and the Arts: Collected Essays.*

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great detail how Scaliger emends and interprets the text of these often difficult authors, stressing both his indebtedness to his predecessors and his own great skill and originality. Grafton agrees with other recent scholars that some of the features of modern textual criticism associated with the name of Karl Lachmann were anticipated and practiced by Renaissance scholars before Scaliger, but he gives Scaliger credit for having introduced the notion of a lost archetype to which the common errors of all extant manuscripts may be attributed (p. 173–179). Grafton recognizes some of Scaliger's shortcomings, such as specific errors, his failure to acknowledge his debt to his predecessors (p. 192), and his excesses in personal polemics, which may be attributed to the matrix of humanist rhetoric from which Renaissance philology was but slowly emancipated. Occasionally Grafton seems to overemphasize the innovative merits of his hero (p. 188–189), and I frankly do not understand what it means to be imprecise but accurate (p. 62).

The ample documentation given in the footnotes and appendices is judiciously selected and impeccably cited and printed. This study is not only drawn from the published writings of Scaliger, his contemporaries, and predecessors, but also from his letters and manuscript notes. Grafton shows convincingly that Scaliger was fully conscious of his method and of its validity. In interpreting the lexicographer Festus, Scaliger utilized the methods and results of the study of Roman law that had been successfully pursued by French scholars from Guillaume Budé to Scaliger's friend and teacher, Jacques Cujas. In his treatment of the poet Manilius, Scaliger showed a rather detailed knowledge of ancient astronomy and astrology and also displayed a critical attitude toward astrology that was uncommon in his time and seemed to reflect the influence of Giovanni Pico (p. 219–220).

The volume is a masterful treatment of an important subject, well and even elegantly written, clearly presented, and remarkably polite even in its polemics. Grafton shows a thorough familiarity with the methods and achievements of both historical and philological scholarship, and his work will be deservedly applauded by the practitioners of both fields, as well as by other scholars and laymen interested in the history of learning

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and of scholarship. The book may serve as a model for similar investigations on related topics that remain to be done. Written by a comparatively young scholar of great learning, competence, and talent who is teaching at one of our major universities, this work should call attention to a field that has been relatively neglected by recent scholars and that has been all but ignored by many specialists in other fields and by the general public. History and classical philology, which are some of the core subjects of the humanities and of humanistic scholarship, have often been dismissed as a "liberal art" and a gratuitous entertainment for a few specialists and a privileged leisure class. They are in fact well-defined branches of valid knowledge (recognized as sciences in all modern languages except English), with rigid criteria of evidence that determine in all pertinent cases what is correct and incorrect, beyond personal or political opinions and preferences. These methods insure a cumulative progress in the attainment of valid knowledge, and they are capable of further refinement and of ever-new applications to new areas and subjects. These methods provide a firm basis for such new and fashionable enterprises as the history of ideas, social history, literary criticism, or such social sciences as linguistics, sociology, and anthropology. All these enterprises will make lasting contributions only to the extent to which they are grounded on the tested methods of history and philology. In proposing a clear and firm conception of these methods and their gradual historical development, Grafton is making a valuable contribution to our contemporary and often confused discussion of the meaning and purpose of humanistic scholarship on all levels of knowledge and of education. The example of Scaliger and his contemporaries shows us that in the sixteenth and early seventeenth century, troubled by great religious and political conflicts from which scholars and scientists as individuals and citizens could not isolate themselves, the republic of letters, of science, and of learning, continued to flourish and to progress in its own domain and beyond all divisions. The lesson implied for our own century needs no further elaboration.

We are looking forward with great expectation to Grafton's second volume, which will treat Scaliger's later work and his lasting contribution to historical chronology.

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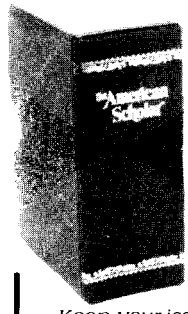

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The Reader Replies

Elegiac Melodies

Robert Leiter's review of *Willa: The Life of Willa Cather* in the Autumn 1984 issue takes Phyllis C. Robinson to task for raising the question of Cather's sexual orientation. Leiter cites the well-known fact that Cather early in life cut her hair short, dressed as a man, and insisted on being called "William." However, he gives the impression that she had dropped these rebellious gestures before she entered the University of Nebraska. But her style during her first years in Lincoln was formidably masculine and "William" was the name she was known by to the Pound family and the form she used in signing letters to Louise Pound. Only pressure from her friends eventually persuaded her to drop it.

Leiter also questions Phyllis Robinson's suggestion that a strong emotional attachment existed between Cather and Louise Pound, and asks for evidence. Robinson was not able to quote directly from Cather's correspondence because such quotation was forbidden by the terms of Cather's will. However, the relevant letters have now been extensively paraphrased by Sharon O'Brien in her essay "The Thing Not Named: Willa Cather as a Lesbian Writer" in the Summer 1984 issue of *Signs*. The originals in the library of Duke University appear to support Robinson's view of the relation. In one letter, dated June 15, 1892, Cather expresses regret that friendships between women are looked upon as unnatural.

Leiter notes that E. K. Brown did not discuss any such relation in the biography he was at work on in 1951 at the time of his death, which Leon Edel completed. But this biography was begun only three years after Cather's own death in close collaboration with her longtime companion Edith Lewis. A biography written at that time under such circumstances had necessarily to be discreet. Leon Edel has revealed the difficulty he had in persuading Miss Lewis to allow him even to publish the true date of Willa Cather's birth (1873) instead of the one that appeared in *Who's Who* and on her gravestone (1876).

Robinson's discussion of Willa Cather's lesbianism is decried by Leiter as a "grave error," and as "damaging" and "distressing." But her treatment of this side of Cather's personality is everywhere sympathetic, sensitive, and not in the least sensational. In the first part of his review Leiter appears unwilling to countenance Robinson's conjectures. Near the end, however, he changes his approach and remarks, "But let us assume, for argument's sake, that Robinson is correct, that Cather was a lesbian. What does this tell us about her life and art? In the end nothing is gained through this knowledge. . . ."

A writer's sexual orientation may or may not be important in understanding that writer's art. But does Leiter seriously believe that it is irrelevant to understanding her or his *life*? It would, I think, be hard to maintain that view even in a liberal cosmopolitan city, let alone in "middle America." As faculty adviser for the last dozen years to the University of Nebraska gay and lesbian students association, I can assure readers of THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR that "growing up gay" in a small Nebraska town is still, for most young people, a devastating experience, even in the 1980s. Anxiety about how one's family, friends, and neighbors will react to the discovery is still very high. Does Mr. Leiter think it was less so one hundred years ago? To imply that such a question is not relevant to understanding a woman's "life" shows a remarkable lack of imagination.

Public attitudes toward lesbians in the midwest are slowly changing. One significant influence in affecting this change will be a growing recognition of the contribution of lesbians to American culture. To accuse Phyllis Robinson of bowing to "market considerations" because she has had the courage to write a book that makes a real contribution toward candor and tolerance is, I think, outrageous.

LOUIS CROMPTON
University of Nebraska
Lincoln, Nebraska

ROBERT LEITER replies: Louis Crompton's point is well taken. A writer's sexual orientation *is* important in understanding his or her life. But my argument—which Crompton ignores in his letter—was

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that Robinson never proved her contention about Cather's lesbianism. She merely stated her case as if it were empirical fact, then proceeded by means of wild conjecture.

The fact that Sharon O'Brien has published an essay "proving" Cather's lesbianism is an extraneous matter. I was dealing with Robinson's biography, which in my opinion was unsatisfactory.

As for Cather's relationship with Louise Pound, strong attachments between women were not unusual during the period; nor were declarations of affection. That such effusions should be interpreted as essentially sexual may be making too much of the matter. And that is the major weakness of Robinson's biography: the reduction, or the filtering, of all things in Cather's life through the lens of sexuality.

Crompton has obviously accepted Cather into the ranks of homosexual writers, and if that pleases him, then so be it. But I still submit that it does Cather a disservice. If, when young, she was inclined to fall in love with women, then there is no harm in saying so. Yet no trace of this adolescent experimentation is evident in the mature Cather (or in the philosophy behind the fiction). I quote from Robinson: She "cared too much for order . . . to be quite comfortable with attitudes that seemed to her to verge on anarchy. . . . She took her stand early on the side of sense, action and control as opposed to sensibility, introspection and emotional profligacy."

But my criticism was as much of Robinson's work as of all biographers who wish to prove a point rather than to try to understand what a writer's life and work *means*. Crompton seems to be one of those academics who spends his days sifting through the great works of the past in search of clues about the sexuality of writers. I find this not only a misguided endeavor, but also a tragic one. Dividing literature into those who "were" and those who "weren't" is the province of the gossip columnist, not the scholar.

I agree with Crompton that I was perhaps too hard on Phyllis Robinson. Doubtless, she meant well. But I was not only writing a review; I was also expressing my dismay over a book I had so longed to read.

F. R. Leavis

It was so good to read in your Spring 1985 issue Dan Jacobson's memoir of F. R. Leavis, a memoir that did not dwell on his acerbity or indeed his paranoia. I was one of his earliest pupils, paying him out of my own pocket as well as going to my assigned director of studies, and I always found him the most considerate of mentors. I remember particularly one Sunday teatime when I was telling him of having to tow my old motorboat by wading along the riverbed because the tow rope was too short, and saying that the Cam was "not the sort of river one likes to walk along the bottom of" (it was very muddy). Mrs. Leavis took me to task for my clumsy sentence, but Frank said firmly, "Now, Queenie, that's a perfectly good idiom for the kind of conversation Keith-Lucas and I are having. The Cam is not a river I'd like to walk along the bottom of."

I happened to meet Leavis as I was going into the Senate House to take the second part of the English Tripos. I told him I felt fairly secure about everyone except Pope, who had always puzzled me. "Pope," he said, "found a medium in the heroic couplet that would resist him." Those were the first words I wrote in answer to the first question in the examination, and I am told that "Q" used them to justify his belief that I should be given a "First."

So, many thanks to Dan Jacobson.

Alan Keith-Lucas
Chapel Hill, North Carolina

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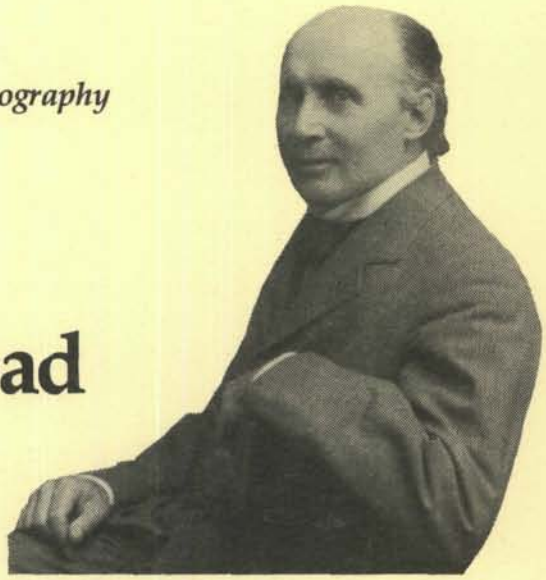

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